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CONTEMPORARY ANTI-PLATONISM

ERIC UNGER

1

Four Intellectuals Against Plato

THERE is a curious feature noticeable in the development of contemporary political philosophy that seems to deserve some attention: the ever-increasing hostility of eminent intellectuals towards Plato. A closer investigation of this feature will, I think, show that it is more than a merely incidental phenomenon, and that it is, in its own small way, an indication of the direction in which our cultural tendencies are moving. It can hardly be a coincidence without significance that four distinguished writers, a historian, a classical scholar, a theorist of science and a logician have within a period of a few years published books in which the first great political philosophy of the West as contained in Plato's *Republic* has been made the subject of violent attack. We refer to Toynbee's *A Study of History*, R. H. S. Crossman's *Plato To-day*, K. R. Popper's *The Spell of Plato* — the first volume of his work *The Open Society and its Enemies* — and Lord Russell's *Philosophy and Politics*. Within this group of four Anti-Platonists we may discern one quietly-arguing opponent of the basic doctrine of the *Republic* and three rather furious scholars who permit a lot of political passion to enter their argument. The moderate rejection of Platonist politics is to be found in Professor Toynbee's criticism of its central idea, the conception of the 'philosopher-king'. Let us, for the sake of convenience, quote the famous passage in the *Republic*: 'There is no hope of a cessation of evils for the states — and, in my opinion, none for mankind — except through a personal union between political power and philosophy and a forcible disqualification of those common natures that now follow one of these two pursuits to the exclusion of the other. Either the philosophers must become kings in our states, or else the people who are now called kings and potentates must take — genuinely and thoroughly — to philosophy, (Rep. 473D). This demand, Professor Toynbee holds, involves a flagrant contradiction. It is 'the incompatibility between the detachment of the philosopher and the coercive methods of political potentates'. 'The philosopher-king turns out to be incapable of saving his fellow men from the shipwreck of a disintegrating society'; 'If the philosopher-king finds that he can not get his way by charm, he will throw away his philosophy and take to the sword'. So, Professor Toynbee concludes, the

saviour of socially diseased mankind could never be a philosopher-king because he may be compelled to use the power he has.

The answer which Plato could give to this objection can be easily inferred: there is no inherent contradiction between knowledge and power. Or such a contradiction, at least, would have to be proved. The philosopher-king is in no way compelled 'to throw his philosophy away' if he is going to 'take to the sword'. The sword is implied in every executive power of every form of government. The very point of Plato's conception is that for once it should be given to the philosopher. He never pre-supposes that the philosopher would not use it. Professor Toynbee obviously has in mind another sort of saviour whom he confuses with the philosopher-king and whose rule, indeed, would be incompatible with the use of the sword, the Christian saviour in whom he sees the goal of history. The essence of Plato's teaching, however, is not that physical power is intrinsically bad; nor that rule or submission can be valued in themselves, the one as desirable, the other as undesirable; nor that their dualism should be abolished altogether. His doctrine is that the answer to the problem of power, rule, and submission depends on the decision of the question: *Who* should rule? Plato answers: He who knows most.

One would think that this answer, as a theoretical statement, would be difficult to refute. In particular, one would expect that, in principle at least, it would appeal to those whose life is devoted to the quest for knowledge, provided that there is a way out for their modesty in case they should imagine the call to power to be addressed to them personally. But — and this is a remarkable sign of our time — quite the opposite is the case. An outburst of angry voices from just these intellectuals echoes Plato's demand that the intellect in what he thought to be its highest and widest form should rule. Let us give a few instances of the tone in which they react to the conception based on this idea. 'The more I read it [the *Republic*], the more I hate it', writes Crossman (p. 275). 'Plato's philosophy . . . , asserting the existence of absolute truth succeeded in giving to a dying order and an outworn social structure the trappings of eternal verity. It did not discover anything new but perfected the systematization of a current creed' (p. 278). Plato, if reborn in the modern world, would, in Germany, when the Nazi regime had been established, 'approach its members with proper dignity and offer his services' (p. 282). He would be 'delighted to find that he and his associates were all immediately accepted and put in positions of apparent power' (pp. 282-3).

Let us turn to the second critic, Karl Popper, the well-known theorist of science. 'Plato', he writes, 'is not even interested in those problems which men usually call the problem of justice' (p. 92).

'Behind Plato's definition of justice stands fundamentally his demand for a totalitarian class rule and his decision to bring it about' (p. 78). 'Totalitarian morality overrules everything, even the definition, the Idea, of the philosopher' (p. 121). 'Plato himself is not truthful when he makes this statement: True philosophers are those who love truth. He does not really believe in it, for he declares . . . rather bluntly that it is one of the royal privileges of the sovereign to make full use of lies and deceit' (p. 121). But Plato does not permit lying on the part of the subjects of his future state. 'Only in this slightly unexpected sense is Plato's philosopher-king a lover of truth' (p. 121). 'What a monument of human smallness is this idea of the philosopher-king. . . . What a distance from this (the Socratic) world of irony and truthfulness and reason to Plato's kingdom of the sage whose magical powers raise him high above ordinary men; but not high enough to forgo the use of lies, nor to neglect the sorry game of all shamans, the sale of taboos — of breeding taboos — for power over his fellow men' (p. 137).

A no less violent onslaught on the political theories of the great political philosopher comes from the pen of the great logician, Lord Russell. After having stated that 'Plato's family and friends . . . were led to become Quislings' in the Peloponnesian war, he goes on to say: 'After the defeat Plato set to work to sing the praise of the victors by constructing a Utopia of which the main features were suggested by the constitution of Sparta. Such, however, was his artistic skill that Liberals never noticed his reactionary tendencies until his disciples Lenin and Hitler had supplied them with a practical exegesis.' 'That Plato's *Republic* should have been admired on its political side, by decent people, is perhaps the most astonishing example of literary snobbery in all history. Let us consider a few points in this totalitarian tract. The main purpose of education to which everything else is subordinated, is to produce courage in battle. To this end, there is to be a rigid censorship of all cultural productions from nursery tales to poetry and music. 'The government is to be in the hands of a small oligarchy who are to practise trickery and lying — trickery and manipulating the drawing of lots for eugenic purposes, and elaborate lying to persuade the population that there are biological differences between the upper and lower classes. Finally, there is to be large-scale infanticide when children are born otherwise than as a result of governmental swindling' (p. 13).

'So Plato taught, but by concealing his thought in metaphysical mists he gave it an impersonal and disinterested appearance which deceived the world for ages' (p. 14).

This is, according to Lord Russell, the gist of the *Republic* and in a similar way, as we have seen, Mr Crossman and Mr Popper present

to the general reader a work which up till now did not seem to have many equals in world literature.

2

Lie and Fraud

What are the common traits of these bitter, enraged and almost abusive comments? We must distinguish between the general attitudes of Plato's critics and the particular points in Plato's work which they incriminate. As to the question of attitude: all three scholars are staunch democrats. All three see in Plato a fascist, a reactionary or a totalitarian. They seem to diverge, however, in judging Plato's attitude towards militarism, so closely connected with totalitarianism. Russell, for instance, declares that militarism is the main feature of political Platonism, while Crossman admits that Plato 'denounced militarism as fiercely as democracy'. All three, again, find him guilty of the moral unscrupulousness which is typical of the totalitarian dictator. All three, finally, blame him for believing in eternal truth and wishing to arrest the incessant change and development of human affairs. Secondly, regarding the selection of passages in the *Republic* upon which their verdict is based, we can notice a clear difference between Mr Crossman on the one hand and Mr Popper and Lord Russell on the other. Here, Mr Crossman's judgment is far more cautious and far more in agreement with the facts, i.e. with the actual content of Plato's writing. The points of accusation in the *Republic* are, above all, two:

(a) the deliberate invention of a sort of religious myth suited to make the unphilosophical majority of the population understand that there are three natural types of men, each qualified for one of the three main functions in social life, namely for governing, defending and sustaining the social body; that the state must be built upon this tripartition; and that it is bound to perish if the distribution of the social and political functions of man does not follow this natural order of human types.

(b) a stratagem proposed, in order to enable the rulers of the ideal state to pursue a policy of eugenics and primitive birth-control applied to the second class of that state, to the 'guardians', i.e. the soldiers and administrators.

Now, the unanimity of the three scholars in their valuation of these passages extends only to the first of them. As to the second, Mr Crossman though keenly on the lookout for weak points in the *Republic*, does not seem to attach any importance to it, while Mr Popper and Lord Russell make the most of it. Let us begin with this second charge, which is the gravest.

As will be remembered, Plato proposes for the ruling classes of

his state the radical abolition of the two main features of private life, the family and the possession of property. Family life and private property are reserved for the governed. The prohibition of family for the biologically qualified class of rulers and members of the executive leads to the somewhat fantastic institution which places the whole procreation of this set of people under the strict regulation of the law. They cannot choose their partner and must not know their offspring, which are brought up by the state. A. E. Taylor, in his *Plato*, characterizes the situation of the guardians as one of almost intolerable hardship and as one which implies 'a much severer restraint than any which has ever been adopted by a Christian society'. 'It is plain that the governing classes . . . are expected to find no gratification for the sexual impulses except on the rare and solemn occasions when they are called on to beget offspring for the state' (p. 278). Anticipating, therefore, some sort of natural revolt of the lower order of the guardians against the decisions of their superiors in arranging these matches, Plato thinks of a way of avoiding the split within the governing section. And he frankly resorts to a fraud or, as he sees it, to a kind of deception such as the doctor might sometimes deem necessary. He proposes to conceal the responsibility of the superiors for selecting the partners in procreation by 'contriving an ingenious system of lots' so that the manner in which couples are united 'may be imputed to chance' (Rep. 460). Now, it can be admitted that such a procedure is indefensible. Besides, closer investigation would show the measure to be completely unworkable. Moreover, it does not even seem necessary since people who have been brought up in the iron discipline and in the unshakable belief in the rightness of the principles of the ideal state could also be brought to accept its consequences by other means than those of deception. The conduct of every ascetic is sufficient proof that a deeply rooted faith can produce submission to similar or even greater privations. So the whole idea of fabricating lots, which remains entirely vague and nebulous regarding the question of how it would work in concrete detail and, above all, how it could be kept secret 'for ever', appears to be nothing but a subordinate trifle in the huge structure of the *Republic*, a carelessly worded sentence which expresses the first expedient that occurred to the author for meeting a difficulty. A fair criticism of Plato's political conception would have seen this slipshod remark in its proper proportion to an ocean of deep and elaborate thought. It seems, therefore, grotesque to choose the content of these two lines which can be dismissed without affecting one single part of the *Republic* as the viewpoint from which to look at the whole work; to present, as Lord Russell does, the government of the Platonic state as an oligarchy 'who are to practise trickery and lying' is about as

fair as to summarize, say, the merits of Leibnitz by presenting him as the man who tried by fraudulent means to pass himself off as a great mathematician. From the accounts given by Mr Popper and Lord Russell the reader would get the impression that the Platonic government was a gang of shabby rulers craving for power ('shamans selling breeding taboos for power over their fellow men') who applied a number of dirty tricks devised to cheat the people in order to suppress and exploit it. Lord Russell, referring to 'Lenin and Hitler' — and how unjust alone is this 'and' — as Plato's 'disciples', and probably wishing, thereby, to stress the totalitarian character of both Communism and Nazism, does not seem to realize that these two forms of state and government could only be likened to Plato's scheme, if they imposed all exceptional obligations and hardships *exclusively on the ruling élite* but not on the people; that is to say, if the Nazis should demand racial purity, military service, etc., only from themselves, i.e. from members of the party, but not from the masses, or if the Soviet system should forbid private property only to its officials and to those who belong to the Communist Party, but should permit it to the people of Russia. The considered 'deceit' too, is, so to speak, an inner-party affair.

But, Crossman, Popper and Russell will reply, how can this fraud be just a casual proposal, since we can see from other passages in the *Republic* that the use of lies is by no means restricted to the treatment of the ruling section alone, but is recommended as a method of shaping the views of the people as a whole? This brings us to the first point mentioned above. Plato advises the rulers to manufacture a myth in order to explain to the people the necessity of its threefold partition into philosopher-kings, guardians and civilians. 'We shall tell our people', he says, that 'the God who created you mixed gold in the composition of such of you as are qualified to rule . . . while in the auxiliaries he made silver an ingredient, assigning iron and copper to the cultivators of the soil and the other workmen . . . Yet, sometimes a golden parent will produce a silver child, and a silver parent a golden child, and so on, each producing any . . . The rulers therefore have received this charge first and above all from the gods, to see to it that, by suitable tests and without pity, the children are to be transferred to that section of society and to that status to which they belong, not according to the chance of birth but according to the nature of their faculties and constitution' (Rep. 415).

This story, made after the fashion of a myth of popular religion, Plato calls a 'lie'. The cynical confession is answered by all three intellectuals with an outcry of moral indignation. Mr Crossman sees in the 'metal-fable' nothing less than the discovery of the propaganda lie and portrays Plato as being highly pleased with the performance of Goebbels. Mr Popper reveals Plato as insincere in

his definition of philosophy as love of truth, and he unmasks the philosopher-king as a sovereign who loves truth only in the utterances of his subjects. Lord Russell shows his contempt by denouncing this 'elaborate lying to persuade the population that there are biological differences between the upper and lower classes'. This accumulation of massive and solemn morality will not impress anybody who will take the trouble to contrast it with the light and gracious way and the self-ironic tone in which Plato presents his gold and silver story. It begins, after much humorous anticipation of its absurdity and incredibility, with an introduction which is nothing but a fable made from the literal meanings of the metaphor 'mother earth' (in the sense of 'one's own country'); and it ends with Socrates' question whether his listeners had any suggestion to offer as to how to bring the people to believe in the stuff. 'None at all' is the reply; at least none to persuade those to whom the story will be told first. Subsequent generations may, perhaps, believe it. Whereupon Socrates, with a sort of comic resignation, concludes the debate by saying 'We shall leave then this fiction to its fate', i.e. let this go as it may. Imagine Hitler saying: Well, if the Germans do not want to believe that there is a world conspiracy of Jewry — let them not believe it; or the Russian propagandists saying: Well, if the people do not want to believe that Trotsky is a fascist counter-revolutionary, and not one of the founders of the Soviet Union — let them. But this is not the point in question. The point is that, firstly, the close association between 'propaganda' and 'lie' must be dissolved in order to distinguish between what the holder of power believes himself and what he wishes his subjects to believe. One cannot speak of propaganda lie unless the ruling clique do not believe what they propagate. The rulers of Russia cannot believe that Trotsky has not played a great historic part in the victorious conduct of the revolution. Nor did Goebbels believe in a general enmity of the Jews against Germany before the Nazis started persecuting them. Yet they spread those beliefs, and therefore lied. Plato, on the other hand, does not only emphatically believe that what he is going to tell the people in the form of his fable is true — that is to say, he is not only convinced of the moral or the meaning of his story — but this meaning, namely the biological difference between types of men, is the very basis of his political teaching. He does not need to take to 'elaborate lying' to persuade the population that there are natural differences between the upper and the lower classes because he *defines* classes not in terms of economical differences but in terms of natural types. You cannot call a man a liar because he happens to hold views which you do not share. So there remains the metaphorical garb of the moral in a fable which is the 'lie'. Now it is only from Plato himself that the three writers have borrowed the

characterization of a myth or a fable as a 'lie'. Normally, myth and poetry are not called 'lies', if they are meant to convey an idea which the narrator shares. If we told a savage in the jungle not to touch an electric wire because there was a wild demon in it, we would not be telling him a lie in the ordinary sense. The severer judgment of Plato must be viewed and discussed in connection with his general moral censure of poetry and mythology — an attitude to which we can find a parallel in Nietzsche's saying 'But the poets lie too much'. This sort of charge would leave ordinary people cold. Only politicians with their meticulous respect for truth could join Plato in his puritan attitude.

3

The Philosopher-King

But all this, I think, is not the innermost meaning of the attack on Plato. The real significance of the criticism seems to be revealed by the fact that all three scholars, with remarkable unanimity, have minimized to a surprising extent the central doctrine of the *Republic*, the idea of the union between 'philosophy' and power. Students and readers of Plato throughout the centuries have regarded this conception, and this one only, as the kernel of his political work; and it is this thesis which gives everlasting importance to the *Republic*. Why, then, have the three intellectuals, when they intended to refute Plato's political philosophy, directed the main force of their attack against proposals which are (at any rate in the Platonic perspective) subordinate and which they have had elaborately to assimilate to the slogans of modern everyday politics? Let us glance at the arguments by which the critics have tried to dispose of the fundamental idea of Plato's political philosophy.

We have already commented briefly on Professor Toynbee's remark on the philosopher-king in the beginning of this article. Mr Popper devotes two whole chapters of his book to the examination of Plato's demand. If, however, one looks more closely at these chapters — numbers 7 and 8 — one sees that they only *seem* to be concerned with what Plato says and means, but are actually written either to get rid of his problem — and consequently of his answer — or to judge its answer not on its own merits but by its incidental association with side issues. In chapter 7 Mr Popper proposes to replace Plato's question 'Who shall rule?' by the question, 'How can we organize political institutions so that bad rulers can be prevented from doing too much damage?' Using the concepts 'bad' (and 'good', by implication) he forgets to tell us who is to be the judge of good and bad, and whether exactly the same institutions which might prevent a bad ruler from doing too much harm might

not be used to prevent a good ruler from doing the right and necessary thing. Besides, he seems to mix up two modes of reflection. Either we are concerned with formulating a political ideal, assuming that there is a power of the human mind to devise the best and to persuade lesser intellects, by sheer force of argument, to adopt it; and then we are in the sphere of considerations such as those of Plato and would have to admit that no authority is better qualified to determine good and bad than the deepest and most comprehensive knowledge. Or we are concerned with harsh political reality inevitably interspersed with recurrent degeneration and catastrophe; and then we are not in the sphere of free and unfettered thought, but would have to admit that both framing and introducing political institutions (which have a chance of being put into practice and of controlling a 'bad' ruler) are expressions of an *already existing* political power or influence — other than that of the ruler — and that the judgment about good and bad is nothing but the opinion of those representing that particular power or influence. In short, if power and thought are on two radically different planes, Mr Popper's advice seems to be circular; if they are not, we are in the world of Plato. On this subject a few more words will be said below. At any rate, chapter 7 of Mr Popper's book is intended to avoid Plato's problem because, as he concedes, this problem, if once admitted, would make Plato's solution appear to be at least reasonable (p. 106). Then, in case the argument for eliminating Plato's question should not suffice, Mr Popper treats Plato's answer in a further chapter. This — chapter 8 — purports to be an examination of the conception of the philosopher-king. Let us make a rapid survey of it. Of its sixteen pages, the first six are devoted to a profuse moral excursus on the story of 'the lie', with which we have dealt above. There follow two pages in which we are told that the ideas of Goodness and Wisdom mean, on the whole, nothing but 'the ideal of arresting change'. Mr Popper then uses the next four pages (*a*) for unmasking Plato's hidden motive in placing education and eugenics under the supervision of philosophers; (*b*) for discussing the 'balloting fraud' (mentioned above); and (*c*) for condemning a rather licentious wartime regulation of sex conduct that probably appears more offensive to us than to Greeks of the fourth century B.C. At the twelfth of the sixteen pages Mr Popper at last arrives at the theme itself, the *political* institution of the philosopher-king, and quotes the key-sentence of the *Republic* — only to drop the subject again immediately and to devote the remaining four pages of the chapter to a variety of other subjects: we find a demonstration that Plato's reference to an ultimate salvation of mankind through the rule of philosophy does not fit into his completely tribal mentality; we find a line of argument exposing Plato's alleged feelings towards his rival

philosophers, Antisthenes and Isocrates, and his hardly concealed desire to have them suppressed by force; lastly we find the crowning psychological analysis which unveils Plato's secret ambition to become himself the philosopher-king — a revelation which makes Mr Popper 'feel sorry for Plato' and which evokes his comment 'What a monument of human smallness is this idea of the philosopher-king!' But the discussion of this idea is not to be found among the topics of this chapter.

Turning to Mr Crossman's treatment of the cardinal point of Plato's programme we notice similar tactics of evasion. We shall dismiss from the beginning the very poor argument which is taken from the disastrous outcome of Plato's practical experience at the court of Syracuse, and which is used by Mr Crossman and his fellow-writers as a sort of 'experimental refutation' of Plato's political theory. Mr Crossman speaks of Plato's attempt 'to put his philosophy into practice' (p. 259). These words, I think, are equivalent to the expression 'to put his philosophy to the experimental test'. But whereas every scientist who used the word 'experiment' or a synonymous expression knows that the correct use requires a close correspondence between the facts in reality and their representation in theory, there is obviously not the slightest correspondence between the scheme of the *Republic* and the political reality in Syracuse in so far as it could be represented as influenced by Plato. There was a completely superficial and very loose connection between Plato and what happened in Sicily. He was the powerless onlooker at these events and not the powerful experimenter who arranged them. At any rate, according to such scholars as A. E. Taylor, he contemplated only plans of practical Hellenic politics and his object was not, as has been fancied, 'the ridiculous one of setting up in the most luxurious of Greek cities a pinchbeck imitation of the imaginary city of the *Republic*'.

In another objection to the institution of the philosopher-king, Mr Crossman finds fault not so much with the principle itself as with the assumption that sufficiently numerous and sufficiently gifted men will always be available to form a government of the Wise. Plato's proposal, he says, is politically irrelevant 'because the class of wise men is not large enough . . . to become a permanent ruling élite in any city or nation state' (p. 265). One may ask Mr Crossman on what estimate he can base such a statement. Moreover, his anticipation that there would not always be enough members of equal talent to staff even the small minority of rulers shows the critic as still less confident in the equality of human faculties than Plato himself.

A third group of Mr Crossman's arguments is likewise not directed against the principle of philosophic rule as such, but rather against

its betrayal. Plato is blamed for having corrupted his conception of the philosopher-king by choosing the candidates for the function of government in his planned state not from the whole population nor from the working class, but from the gentry or nobility only. Mr Crossman makes light of the passage of the *Republic* (415) which emphatically expresses the contrary of what he says. He informs the reader in a note that he cannot enter into a more detailed consideration of this passage. Lord Russell offers — in his *Politics and Philosophy* — no arguments whatsoever with regard to Plato's central political idea. He ignores it in his account of the *Republic*.

Apart from what the three scholars have said or left unsaid about the conception of the philosopher-king, there is one common feature in their comments on the other Platonic regulations, which shows a peculiar indifference to the logic of criticism. All three are examining and sharply criticizing these remaining parts of the ideal constitution without taking any notice of the fact that Plato had suggested them only *in conjunction* with the institution of the philosopher-king. To the surprise of the reader all three care nothing for the circumstance that all political concepts used under the presupposition of a rule of knowledge have a meaning which is totally different from the meaning they have without such an assumption and considered for themselves. Concepts like dictatorship, liberty, individualism, coercion, totalitarianism, freedom of thought and speech, equality, state control and numerous others, have acquired their ordinary meaning in a political world which is far removed from the scheme of the political speculation of Plato. Now if we grant his fundamental hypothesis that reason in the form of its best representatives can be put on the throne — and any fair criticism of a not unthinkable hypothesis must contain a section in which the assumption is granted at least provisionally or for the sake of argument — all those concepts lose their ordinary meaning. So if his critics attack his programme while deliberately ignoring its primary condition, they waste their time in demonstrating what nobody disputes and attack anything but the Platonic state.

4

Emotional Criticism

What strikes us most in surveying the three attempts to demolish Plato's political philosophy is undoubtedly their extremely emotional character. It is the atmosphere of politics, not the atmosphere of philosophy which prevails in these writings. Above all, the underlying passions reveal themselves in warped lines of argument deviating from the normal course of logical and detached examination so conspicuously that none of the three scholars would fail to detect

it, or indeed would tolerate it for a moment, within his own professional domain.

Let us briefly recapitulate the more surprising features of their polemic. The technique appears throughout to be that of associating what should be separated and of isolating what should be judged together.

1. We nowhere find a direct frontal attack on the main doctrine of the *Republic*, the idea that the highest and fullest possible knowledge shall rule. Instead, we find either the attempt to avoid its examination by substituting another theory of government or another theory of education as subjects of discussion, or the method of discrediting Plato's demand by making the content of two entirely subordinate remarks, however indefensible, about 'lying and fraud', the point of view from which to judge the whole conception.

2. Everywhere we find profuse criticisms of other regulations and implications of the Platonic programme (such as authoritarianism, dictatorship, censorship, agrarian conservatism, anti-commercialism and Spartanism) taken in isolation and as independent characteristics of ancient or modern political reality, although, in fact, they either make no sense or have no importance if separated from the institution of philosophical government. In short, Plato is treated as if he were a partisan in the dispute between Toryism and Leftism and not as what he is most emphatically and for everybody to see, namely the advocate of something entirely new and extraordinary. (Plato's political philosophy 'did not discover anything new', says Mr Crossman.)

3. The expedient of using Plato's Sicilian adventure as a means of refuting his theory rests on the simple confusion of an unsuccessful attempt at a political experiment with a negative result of such an experiment when successfully made.

4. The elementary rule of fair criticism — to take a propounded idea at its best, or even to try to improve on it — is not once observed. The idea, for example, that the philosopher-king need not necessarily 'lie', or need not necessarily be the product of an aristocratically biased mind, or need not necessarily be chosen from the nobility, and need not even necessarily fit into the framework of the specifically Platonic conception of philosophy — all this did obviously never occur to the critics of Plato. Why not? Were such fine intellects unable to see what everybody concerned with constructive criticism can see? This is not very probable. They have chosen not to see it, through yielding to an emotional urge which, incidentally, made them lose their scholarly temper and their historical sense. Let anyone who does not regard the strange course of the anti-Platonic arguments as due to an interference of the will with the process of reasoning look at the strong language and the openly

confessed hostility. Thus the question arises: What emotional factor inspired them with the hatred of Plato's political thought?

The answer to this question seems to us to be at the same time the answer to a problem of far greater importance than the merely personal question of the particular ways in which a few intellectuals have approached the issues of political thought.

5

Why Some Intellectuals Hate Plato

The search for what exceeds the individual and personal elements of our case takes us, I think, to the root of the matter if we turn to the basic antagonism of attitudes to the social world — that between the impulse to *practical* activity and the impulse to *theoretical* thought. This we believe to be the point at issue between Plato and his critics. Plato is an extreme theorist. As if anticipating and wishing to cut short all objections raised from the standpoint of practical politics against his theory, he even goes so far as to state bluntly that the realization of his ideas *does not matter at all*. In the concluding passage of Book IX Glaucon asks:

The man of understanding, then, will not concern himself with politics? Socrates replies:

— By the dog, he will. In the city which is his own he certainly will, though in the land of his birth perhaps not unless some providential accident should occur.

— I understand; he will do so, you mean, in the city whose organization we have now completed and which is confined to the region of speculation; for I do not believe that it is to be found anywhere on earth.

— Well, perhaps in heaven there is laid up a pattern of it for him who wishes to behold it and, beholding, to organize himself accordingly. And the question of its present or future existence on earth is quite unimportant. For in any case he will adopt the practices of such a city to the exclusion of those of every other.

Plato here says in plain words that the empirical existence of the best conceivable political organization is 'unimportant' — a rather surprising remark in a treatise on politics. How is it to be reconciled with other statements in the *Republic* which seem to contradict it flatly (for instance 458, 471e-473c, 499-502)? To deal fully with this particular question would involve us in a far more general and fundamental investigation of the nature of social philosophy than is possible within the limits of an essay on the interpretation of

Plato. We should have to consider a particular field of social research which does not seem to have been explicitly defined, though now and then social thinkers, and Plato amongst them, have done some pioneer work on this ground. We might call it the field of '*pure social thought*' and conceive of it as an analogue to a domain of *pure* knowledge, like geometry, which underlies and promotes the empirical knowledge of natural science and technology. Pure social thought, though differing in many respects from its geometrical counterpart, would however have precisely the same function as that which the science of pure forms fulfils in the study of nature — the function of investigating *possibilities* rather than *actualities*. And it is only from understanding more fully the character of social possibility that a clearer insight into the relation of social theory and practice can be expected. But let us return to Plato.

Two characteristics of what is to be understood by Plato's 'theoretical attitude' are revealed in the passage quoted above. *Firstly*, the validity of an ideal demand is not dependent on the possibility of putting it into practice. The discovery of the right state has its own value, it counts more than the speculation on the question how it could be brought about.

Secondly, this way of looking at things implies a *practical* demand for the behaviour of the individual 'man of understanding', the 'intellectual', as we would call him. He ought to conduct his personal life in devoting his political interests to the best state only, in trying to acquire those moral qualities which are demanded of the ruling type in this state, and in refusing to take part in the practical politics of his native country. With these stipulations Plato certainly touches explosive material.

There is no use denying that the heart's desire of the overwhelming majority of mankind aims at practical political effects and that our most intensive wishes centre around our collective affairs in so far as they are capable of actual improvement or correspond to our personal advantages. All of us, in fact, stand under the enormous and incessant pressure of practical politics. The noblest incentives are to be found in the midst of a host of lower impulses which all combine to throw us on the battlefield of interests with the sole and passionate aim of achieving tangible political results. Among this general drive for politics there is only one type of man who is destined to be excluded not from *feeling* the powerful appeal which concrete politics has for all men, but from *yielding* to it — the philosophical type, or the man who can appreciate the unique importance of theory. And on this issue a violent inner conflict is bound to break out in the mind of this kind of man. It is the clash between the universal human passion for taking part in the affairs of one's own smaller or greater community and the demand of an

intellectual conscience not to let one's desire to join in the 'practical' discussion — i.e. politics in times of peace — interfere with the consistent pursuit of pure thought. There is no doubt that this sort of discussion is constantly needed and that there will never be any lack of men who are willing and capable of conducting it. But necessary as are examination and counsel in the public affairs of the moment and of the immediate future, just as necessary is the function of extending the sight of the mind as far as possible to the limits of the social world, not only in search of facts but also in search of their potential order and constellation under the guidance of values. For without this, so to speak, astronomical view, no orientation in the social cosmos is conceivable. And for this only very few men are available; the social destiny of mankind is an aim in terms of which all particular aims of all faculties of the human mind can be interpreted. So it is evidently the task of the man with an extremely theoretical mind. Feeling this duty imposed upon him — for he is better equipped than others to detect the inherent futility and also the inherited and irremovable dishonesty of all realistic policy — he sees that he must forsake his share in the fascinating and fame-bringing struggle in which everybody is entitled to throw in his weight — everybody but him. If he is to follow the call of his talent, he must become an ascetic with regard to his ordinary human passion for the *res publica* of his time. He may even have to renounce the important role he may be destined to play on the world stage of the political drama — no small sacrifice demanded from a man by himself, merely because he has the rare disposition for formal and theoretical sight. There is no doubt how this conflict will develop if he is not able to resist the mighty appeal which drives him to march with his fellow beings for common causes in the field of practical politics and to play his part in it: if he compels himself to ignore his contemplative facilities and to suppress them for giving way to his more earthly ambition, he will come to hate and suspect pure theory in the realm of politics in general; he will try to apply whatever he possesses of such non-practical abilities in other fields, and he will think that with this he has done his duty as a philosophical mind. And above all he will come to hate the silent archetype of his own suppressed intellectual self: Plato the theorist. The ordinary man, if he is told of Plato's utopian extravagances in the *Republic*, will laugh at him or at any rate will not experience any emotional reaction. Only a philosophically minded man will hate him. For while the ordinary man has nothing to sacrifice if he rejects the constructions of the philosopher and jeers at what appears to him an empty dream, the intellectual has to pay dearly for joining the crowd in this respect: he has to give up his own distinctive character and to violate the moral demand of pure thought which applies no

less to social matters than to all others with which the scientist or philosopher is concerned.

The critics of Plato are both scientists and philosophers. Professor Toynbee, Mr Crossman and Mr Popper have expressed their views on political philosophy in brilliantly written and fascinating books. On any other subject they and Lord Russell would have sided with the theorist. In the case of Plato they ought to have known that they are not supposed to say against the *Republic* what any politician can say — but that they are asked to begin where Plato ended, to preserve his theoretical impulse and his fundamental insight; that, in Kant's words, they are called upon to 'understand an author better than he understood himself' by expanding his problem, reinterpreting his theory and assuming that 'he may have sometimes spoken, nay, even thought, in opposition to his own opinions'.

This review of attempts to criticize Plato could not be misunderstood more grossly than if one supposed that it is intended to defend the oddities which are determined by the age and place of the origin of the *Republic*. Our account aims at unfolding, though very imperfectly, what comes into sight if we follow up the principle of positive criticism. Kant, applying it, goes so far as to associate the Platonic doctrine with his own conception of 'a constitution of the greatest possible human freedom according to laws by which the liberty of every individual can consist with the liberty of every other'. He calls that 'placing his [Plato's] thought in a clearer light'. This may or may not be tenable, but it seems far more fruitful, at any rate, to connect the idea of a rule of philosophy with that of freedom than to reject their essential relationship outright, or to polemicize seriously against the 'breeding taboos', of all things, in the vast scheme of the *Republic*.

I know of no better summary of all that has been said, and of no better restatement of Plato's method of political philosophy, than the passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason*¹ which we find in the same section as the words just quoted. It runs:

'The Platonic Republic has become proverbial as an example — and a striking one — of imaginary perfection, such as can exist in the brain only of the idle thinker; and Brucker ridicules the philosopher for maintaining that a prince can never govern well, unless he is participant in the *ideas*. But we should do better to follow up this thought, and, where this admirable thinker leaves us without assistance, employ new efforts to place it in a clearer light, rather than carelessly fling it aside as useless, under the very miserable and pernicious pretext of impracticability . . . For there is nothing more pernicious and more unworthy of a philosopher, than the vulgar appeal to so-called adverse experience which indeed would

¹ Book I, § 1, pp. 220-1. Tr. Meiklejohn.

not have existed, if those institutions had been established at the proper time and in accordance with ideas; while, instead of this, conceptions, crude for the very reason that they have been drawn from experience, have marred and frustrated all our better views and intentions. . . .'

SAILORS' ENGLISH

J. H. PARRY

To describe the English as a seafaring race is an exaggeration. Though ships and sailors have traditionally played a leading part in shaping England's fortunes, no more than a very small proportion of Englishmen have ever earned their living at sea. Yet both the slang and the technical terms of the sea are known, either through literature or through direct contact with sailors, to a wide English public, and the English language is full of nautical words and phrases, many of which have become so familiar that their origin is forgotten. As far as literary evidence is to be trusted, this enrichment of our ordinary daily speech is comparatively modern. Sailors have usually been treated sympathetically in English literature (Chaucer is an exception); but the dramatists and novelists who used the sea and ships to elaborate their plots have not always taken the trouble to portray the sailor himself as a character shaped by his profession, with customs, superstitions and dialect all his own. In the whole great range of Elizabethan drama there is hardly a character who is clearly distinguishable by his speech and manner as a sailor. There are a few nautical touches in Restoration drama. Wycherley, who had seen service in the Fleet, convincingly sketched a group of seamen in *The Plain Dealer*, but they are minor characters in the play. Apart from these, Congreve's Ben Legend, who first trod the boards in 1695, was almost the first genuine and recognizable sailor on the English stage. Ben was sympathetically handled by his creator, but it is clear from the dialogue that to be 'half sea-bred' was at that time far from a social recommendation. His nautical slang provoked derision and not kindly interest—certainly not a desire to imitate.

The novelists lagged behind the dramatists in exploiting the characteristics of sea-faring men. Defoe's characters constantly went to sea and suffered piracy or shipwreck; but that is almost the extent of their nautical colour. It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century, in *Peregrine Pickle* and *Roderick Random*, that the sailor with his virtues, eccentricities and peculiar dialect became at last a literary feature and attraction.

The French wars naturally created a wave of interest in the doings of sailors, which was reflected in novels then and later. In 1805 appeared *The Post Captain; or Wooden Walls well manned*, by John Davis—a light and frivolous performance, with little attempt at plot or regard for probability. It was written by a sailor, however, and is full of lively humour and authentic nautical slang. *The Post*

Captain enjoyed great popularity at the time. It has been called the parent of all our nautical novels, though its effects were not at once apparent. Other early nineteenth-century novelists continued to introduce seafaring characters into their books without much attempt to reproduce seafaring manners and speech. There is nothing particularly nautical about Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion*, except the business-like way in which he sets about making his fortune out of prize-money. Miss Austen has, it is true, drawn two convincing seafarers in *Mansfield Park* — the open-hearted midshipman William Price and his father, the ex-lieutenant of marines with his smell of spirits and his interest in dockyard details; but even the elder Price is not made to reveal his profession by his choice of words. A good many years were still to pass before Marryat, seconded by lesser writers like Howard and Chamier, gave the sea-novel a well-deserved vogue and made the sailor, with all the details of his dress, his customs and his speech, a familiar figure in English fiction.

The Englishman's acquaintance with the language of sailors, however, is not derived solely from fiction. Seafaring is not a closed profession. At one time, no doubt, the recruitment of seamen, like the collection of ship-money, was confined to the port towns; but that has long ceased. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century press-gangs had to find able-bodied men, and whatever the law said, they took lads from the farm and the loom as well as from merchant ships and dock-side taverns. Modern conscription has been no respecter of trades; and apart from compulsion, the sea and the possibilities of adventure or of prize-money have attracted men from all the counties of England. The Navy today draws many active-service recruits from inland towns like Birmingham; and sailors who have left the sea do not by any means always settle in port towns. In no country in Europe is the seafaring population more widely spread, both geographically and socially, than in England, and that fact also helps to account for the prevalence of nautical terms in the general English vocabulary.

The words and phrases here described as 'sailors' English' fall roughly into four groups. The first group comprises technical terms in current use at sea, words used in giving orders, making reports, and in general carrying out the work of a ship. The second group comprises slang terms in use at sea — words used among sailors in ordinary conversation to describe the familiar surroundings of daily life, their food, their clothes, their shipmates, and so on. Thirdly, there is a surprisingly well-defined group of sea-metaphors habitually used by sailors to describe objects and actions ashore. Obviously there is a good deal of overlapping between these groups, and in course of time words pass from one group to another. In particular,

words from the first and second groups are used with different meanings in the metaphors of the third, and these uses lead on to the fourth group, comprising words and phrases which originated in the nautical technicalities or nautical slang of a former period, but which have passed into ordinary use ashore and have in some cases entirely lost their nautical connections.

The technical language of the sea is remarkable for its terseness and its accuracy, as might be expected; for it is used for giving orders to considerable bodies of men, often under conditions of bad weather or of sudden emergency, concerning the handling of a valuable, extremely intricate and often perverse mechanism — a ship. There is a word or phrase for every action and every object, and usually the word or the phrase is short and unmistakable. Often, too, the wording of conventional orders and reports is crisply descriptive. Let anyone who doubts these statements try to express, in less than three times the number of words, the meanings of 'anchor's a-cock-bill', 'at short stay', or 'foul hawse'; or consider the sequence of orders for hoisting a boat: 'Hook on — haul taut singly — marry the falls — hoist away — high enough — ease to the life-lines — light to.' Sailors in general are extremely sensitive to any misuse of the technical terms of seamanship, and are reluctant to accept new terms. The capstan, for instance, when turned in the reverse direction, is 'walked back', though it is many years since capstans were worked by tramping sailors shoving at the bars.

Most nautical terms have a long history, despite the changes from wood to steel and from sail to steam, and their history is fairly easy to trace. The earliest comprehensive English manual of seamanship (not of navigation — that has a still older literature) was Sir Henry Mainwaring's *Seaman's Dictionary*, written in the early sixteenth-century and first published in 1644. Mainwaring's own time was remarkable for the rise of a school of professional naval officers. As an officer himself, who represented both the scientific and practical sides of his profession, he wrote primarily for the gentlemen captains of the day, who 'though they be called seamen' did not 'fully and wholly understand what belongs to their profession'. 'This book', says the preface, 'shall make a man understand what other men say, and speak properly himself'; and Mainwaring's definitions are clear, concise and accurate, like the terms which he describes. Consider, as an example of precision, this definition: 'To *Stow* is to put any goods in hold *in order*; for else we say it is not *stowed*, but *laid in hold*.' The *Dictionary* remained the chief authority on seamanship throughout the seventeenth century, for the more pretentious *Dialogues* of Captain Nathaniel Butler, in so far as they relate to seamanship, are a crib of Mainwaring. Butler was a colonial administrator and a gentleman captain who hardly knew port from

starboard, and where he departed from Mainwaring he was usually wrong.

The Seaman's Dictionary was compiled by a sailor for sea-going gentlemen, and presumably was little read ashore. Samuel Johnson, father of English lexicography, cannot have studied it, for his *Dictionary* contains many nautical howlers. 'Belay', for instance, is made a synonym for 'to splice' or 'to mend' a rope; the 'purser' is made the paymaster of a ship — a function which the Admiralty in the eighteenth century were determined he should not perform; perhaps Johnson was misled by 'bursar'. The 'main sheet' Johnson defines as the 'sail of the mainmast'; Dryden is cited as the authority for this statement — most unfairly, for in the example given Dryden uses the word correctly:

Strike, strike the topsail, let the mainsheet fly.

Dr Johnson's acquaintance with the sea was entirely literary; his opinion of sailors was little better than Chaucer's, and for him a ship was but a prison, with the chance of drowning.

For sailors, Mainwaring's *Dictionary* was not really superseded until 1789, the year of the publication of William Falconer's *Universal Dictionary of the Marine*, a much larger work with elaborate illustrations. Falconer incidentally included an appendix of French sea terms, some of which have a most elegant Parisian flavour; as *bas de soie* for bilboes or leg-irons, and *jardins d'amour* for the quarter-galleries. There are a few pieces of English sea-slang, one of the prettiest being 'Banyan-days' — a cant term among common sailors, denoting those days on which they have no flesh meat. It seems to be derived from the practice of a nation amongst the eastern Indians, who never eat flesh. 'Banyan-days' had a long and popular history; for the 'duff' issued in lieu of salt meat supplied a welcome change of diet. The custom and the term lived almost to our time, being driven from common usage by the advent of tinned beef and refrigeration. Apart from these few lapses into slang, Falconer confined himself to technicalities and paid little attention to 'cant terms'. The *Universal Dictionary* went through a number of editions and held the field until the coming of the iron ship. Now, the modern Admiralty *Manual of Seamanship*, an official publication issued to all men on joining the Service, contains a glossary of some three hundred nautical terms; of these three hundred words, over two hundred are in Falconer, and about one hundred are in both Falconer and Mainwaring; their meanings either unchanged, or changed merely to cover the mechanization of the processes which they describe.

But technicalities are only the dry bones of nautical English. It is the slang of the ward-room and the mess-deck (in some respects the two languages are quite distinct) which reveals the inventiveness

and peculiar humour of the sailor. Slang terms are necessarily less definite and lasting than technicalities, and although many current slang sea-phrases have a good antiquity, their history is more difficult to trace. The first lexicographer upon whom the historian can rely was a nineteenth-century one. Admiral W. H. Smyth's *Sailors' Word-book* was published in 1867, in the decade, that is, when the victory of iron over wood was won. It is a mighty monument of nautical erudition. Like Doctor Johnson, the admiral was a staunch conservative, and allowed no finical scruple of impartiality to prevent his expressing his own opinions in his definitions; so we have:

'Boatswain-captain: an epithet given by certain popinjays in the Service to such of their betters as fully understand the various duties of their station.'

'Followers: . . . the young gentlemen introduced into the Service by the captain, and reared with a father's care, moving with him from ship to ship; a practice which produced most of our best officers formerly, but innovation has broken through it, to the great detriment of the Service and the country.'

'Shipmate: a term once dearer than brother, but the habit of short cruises is weakening it.'

'Lime-juice: a valuable anti-scorbutic included by act of parliament in the scale of provisions for seamen. It has latterly been so much adulterated that scurvy has increased three-fold in a few years.' It is curious that Smyth makes no mention of 'limey', the name given by American sailors to Englishmen, and still current in New England.

The Sailors' Word-book, as might be expected, contains a long list of mess-deck names for articles of food and drink. Some of these are now obsolete; 'salt junk', for instance, has long given way to 'corned dog', though 'junk' is still the normal term for old rope. (Incidentally, the first contract for the supply of tinned beef to the Navy was placed with a Mr. Goldner of Galatz, Rumania, in 1844. The sailors hated the meat, and christened it 'Fanny Adams', alluding to a notorious murder case in which a young woman of that name had been killed and her body cut into pieces for disposal. Several early nineteenth-century chap-books commemorate this gruesome story; but Smyth makes no reference to it.) A surprising number of words for food mentioned by Smyth, however, are current today, and of these some were already old when he wrote. 'Burgoo' is now the universal sailors' name for porridge. In Smyth, it is a 'seafaring dish made of boiled oatmeal seasoned with salt, butter and sugar'. Midshipman Echo in *The Post Captain* beats the boy of his mess because 'his kettle is capsized and we shall be obliged to breakfast upon burgoo out of the ship's coppers'. It is not surprising to find H.M.S. *Caledonia*, a little later, nicknamed the 'oatmeal-

bin', and her ship's company described as 'all burgoo-eaters from the captain down to the pigs'.

It is a pity that the wonderfully onomatopoeic synonym, 'loblolly', has passed out of use. Smyth mentions it as obsolete. Smollett, a hundred years before, wrote that his surgeon's mates were called 'loblolly-boys' because of the gruel which they dispensed to the sick. 'Lobscouse', another good old word, still survives — 'an olla-podrida of salt meat, biscuit, potatoes, onions, spices, etc.,' says Smyth; nowadays lobscouse is simply stew, alternatively 'hoosh-my-goosh'. Salt meat and 'hard tack' — biscuit — in Smyth's day still supplied the basis of an astonishing variety of dishes, all with distinctive names, some obvious, some extremely obscure. Why, for instance, should 'a beverage made by seamen of burned biscuit boiled in water' be called 'geo-graffy'? Fortunately tea and coffee have long driven that dismal makeshift from the mess-deck, along with many another unwholesome compound. One of the best evidences of the vitality of sailors' English is the ease with which the mess-deck, while clinging to the old names for the old dishes which survive, coins new names for foodstuffs unknown at sea in Smyth's time. A kipper is a 'sea-pheasant'; sausages are 'bangers'; and dried peas are 'pusser's lead shot'.

Witticisms aimed at unpalatable food naturally included the officer who supplied it. Any official issue, whether of food or of clothes, is a 'pusser's' article. 'Pusser's slops' are the ready-made clothes supplied to new entries upon joining; the professional sailor preferring to have his uniform made to measure by a tailor ashore. Fifty years ago he often made his own. 'Pusser's' issues are traditionally unpopular with the sailor, who is an individualist in such matters; and by a simple transference a 'pusser' officer is one who insists upon a rigid uniformity in all service details. As for the purser himself, he was until comparatively recent times a privileged (and unpopular) shop-keeper as well as a warrant officer. Jokes about him commonly referred to his dishonesty. Mr. Nipcheese was the purser in *The Post Captain* — it was the usual nickname at the time. The 'purser and paymaster' became a commissioned officer in 1843, and his old shop-keeping opportunities of profit have of course disappeared. Relics of his former unpopularity now survive only in nicknames in doubtful taste — 'scran-bosun', 'ship's grocer' and the like. (They are ward-room rather than mess-deck epithets. On the lower deck, 'tradesman' is always a term of respect, denoting a skilled rating of some kind.)

On the whole, the slang names for officers current on the lower deck are conventional rather than descriptive — though they may be abusive — and surprisingly few have any antiquity. Nor are the usual nicknames used among officers themselves — 'Guns', 'Pilot',

'No. 1' and so on — of any great originality or historical interest. 'Skipper' is an old word, however; and 'snotty' as a term of contempt for a midshipman goes back a hundred and fifty years or more, whether as a noun or an adjective. The bosun of the *Rattlesnake* in 1795, when ordered to stop ill-treating one of the 'young gentlemen', replies that he 'was only beating a snotty midshipman'. 'Salt beef squire' used to be the name for a warrant officer; and today a non-specialist executive officer will sometimes describe himself in conversation as 'salt horse'.

If slang names for officers are disappointing, slang names for particular ratings are full of interest, whether for their descriptiveness or for their obscurity. 'Chippy' is an obvious, and an old, name for the carpenter. 'Jack Dusty' — a supply rating — is equally descriptive. Though 'powder-monkey' is obsolete, 'turret-rat' — a gun-sweeper — is current, in the same tradition. A leading hand is a 'killick', from the boat's-anchor badge which he wears upon his sleeve. That a telegraphist should be called a 'sparker' and a signalman a 'bunting-tosser' is entirely natural. The 'Jew' is, not unexpectedly, the ship's tailor. But what are we to make of 'snob', universal name for a ship's cobbler? And why should the master-at-arms and the regulating petty officer, the two ratings of ship's police, be called the 'jaunty' and the 'crusher' respectively? Possibly 'jaunty' may once have been *gendarme*. Soldiers, and in particular the Royal Marines, have, as might be expected, more than their share of nicknames. 'Lobster' died out with the uniform which it described, but the more friendly old word 'jolly' still survives. The Royal Marines were originally recruited largely from the London trained bands, and up to the middle of the last century a 'tame jolly' was a militiaman, a 'Royal jolly' a Marine. 'Pongo' is modern; but it seems to have come to stay.

Sailors have a considerable variety of names for those who shirk their work; but here one must avoid hasty conclusions. 'Idlers' are not, or were not, lazy men, but men whose duties did not include watch-keeping. 'Send all the idlers up', vociferates Midshipman Echo, upon 'all hands' being piped. 'Daymen' is a more usual synonym today. The 'mess-deck dodger', also, is not a man who avoids the work of the mess-deck, but one whose work lies there, as a sweeper; all that he dodges is bad weather on deck. 'Waister' is a deceptive word. In wooden ships it described a man employed in cleaning the waist, the mid-ship section of the upper deck; the waist-party was composed of men too slow or too incompetent for work aloft, and 'waister' thus came to mean good-for-nothing. A lazy fellow is a 'skulker', a 'proper ullage'. He used to be called — until another service appropriated the word and changed its meaning — an 'urk'.

Nautical, or rather naval mess-deck nicknames are more often categorical than personal. *All* tall men are called 'Lofty'. Anyone from Liverpool may be called 'Scouse', from Devonport 'Jan', unless something more to his discredit happens to be known. *All* men named White are called 'Knocker', all men named Harris, 'Chats'. There are many traditional nicknames attached to particular surnames, mostly of obscure origin, inviting a painstaking piece of highly unprofitable research; 'Wiggy' Bennett, 'Jumper' Collins, 'Buck' Taylor, 'Dodger' Long, 'Bungy' Williams, 'Shiner' Wright and so on. Some of these names undoubtedly commemorate naval personages of the past. 'Pincher' Martin, for instance, seems to be an allusion to that notoriously severe disciplinarian, Admiral Sir William Martin. Others, perhaps, are inspired by pugilists or professional footballers. Might the original 'Coshier' Hines have been a particularly violent robber-with-violence? The list is still growing. 'Hookey' Walker and 'Jimmy' Wild seem to be comparative newcomers. No doubt film actors will add their quota in time.

Two of the best examples of long-lived slang phrases are 'warming the bell' and 'tapping the admiral'. To 'warm the bell' is to do something prematurely. When watches were measured by the half-hour glass, an unscrupulous watch-keeper could shorten his watch by warming the glass between his hands, and so making the sand trickle through a little faster; and the metaphor, it is said, has become transferred from the obsolete glass to the bell which still marks the passage of the half-hours at sea. 'Tapping the admiral' is a more uncommon phrase, but it is still used occasionally to describe the habits of those who will drink anything. Smyth mentions it — it was old in his day — and says it alludes to 'the drunkard who stole spirits from the cask in which a dead admiral was being conveyed to England'. These are good hoary old phrases; and a true account of sailors' English must set beside them the long list of new slang terms, invented by sailors of the present day but already established throughout the service: 'flat-iron' for an aircraft carrier, 'tin fish' for a torpedo, 'ping' for ASDIC, and 'skimming dish' for that delightful toy, the motor dinghy. It should in fairness be recorded, as a sign of the times, that a larger type of boat, decorously known in the Royal navies as a motor whaler, is dubbed by the other English-speaking navy a 'gasoline gig'.

Sailors' slang, then, no less than sailors' technical jargon, is characteristic and vigorous, and although much of it dates from the days of sail, there is little reason to suppose that the 'habit of short cruises is weakening it'. What happens to sailors' English when it goes ashore?

The habit of using nautical metaphor when ashore has long been a recognized characteristic of the sailor, both in literature and in

real life. With the growing popularity of the Navy during the French wars, this habit began to attract more frequent literary notice and to provoke affectionate caricature. Most of the humour in *The Post Captain* is of this kind. The First Lieutenant proposes marriage in nautical language:

'Divine Flora, the havoc committed by shells thrown into the seaport of an enemy, is a mere trifle in war-time, compared, queen of queens! to the destruction of my heart from the fire of your eyes. Yes! goddess of goddesses! a shot from either one or both of those heavenly bow-chasers has raked my heart fore and aft and knocked it into splinters; splinters that no carpenter can repair but the magic of your smiles. Alack! alack! every time I lie down in my hammock, I fairly make the clews strand, conceiting I hold you, beautiful Flora, in my arms; and if this be not a proof of my most ardent love, I know not in which point of the compass it lies. Lowering my top-gallant sails to you, I am your dying lieutenant, Henry Hurricane.'

The afflicted lieutenant uses his nautical phrases with unconscious humour; not so his commanding officer, who uses them deliberately to impress, amuse, or insult:

"'I am,'" cried lord Fiddlefaddle, "captain Brilliant's most obedient and very humble servant . . . it is not, I think, in my power to be more obedient or more humble," — and so saying, his lordship took an opera-glass from his pocket, and began to reconnoitre the captain. "And I, sir," said captain Brilliant, "'am lord Fiddlefaddle's most humble-come-tumble out of the main-top into the lower hold! — I would not wish to fall further.'" "Technical!" exclaimed his lordship. . . .

The Post Captain, in the words of a laudatory review of the period, reproduced 'that correct sea language which since the time of Smollett has been seldom found in works of imagination'. The same might be said of the works of Marryat, Chamier and the rest. But it did more; it showed sailors — or at any rate naval officers — exaggerating their jargon in ordinary talk ashore, because it was expected of them. The public loved them for it, and they have gone on doing it ever since. For Jack ashore, a lawyer is a 'land shark' and an empty bottle a 'dead marine'. 'Backing and filling', a sailing-ship phrase, may describe the habit of changing one's mind, or even the operation of turning a motor car round in a narrow space. To excuse or justify one's self is to 'square one's yard arm'; and the attitude of mind of a selfish person is concisely expressed in the sentence 'pull the ladder up, Jack — I'm inboard'.

Language is an important part of professional *esprit de corps*. When the administrative depots, stores and training establishments formerly housed in wooden hulks were moved into barracks and offices ashore, those barracks and offices were commissioned under

the names of ships and provided with gravel 'quarter-decks', brick-built 'mess-decks' and 'ward-rooms'. The practice even deceived the German high command, who during the recent conflict claimed to have sunk a naval airfield situated fifty miles inland. While the Admiralty creates 'ships' ashore, the sailor carries the language of the sea, as he has always done, into his home and the public house where he meets his friends. The sailor who 'pushes off' when it is time to go home, or asks his neighbour at table to 'give the salt a fair wind', is helping to modify his native language, to stamp it more surely as the speech of a seafaring people.

Hundreds of nautical expressions have found a permanent place in colloquial English. 'Taken aback' is an obvious example. So is 'son of a gun', a reminder of the days when women lived on board the king's ships in harbour, and sometimes at sea too. To 'cut and run' once meant to 'let run' the furled sails of a ship by cutting the yards which secured them. How many novelists who use that curious phrase, 'to the bitter end', suspect a possible nautical origin? A *Seaman's Grammar* of 1653 explained that 'a bitter end is but the turn of a cable about the bitts, and veare it out little and little, and the bitter's end is that part of the cable doth stay within board'. The modern equivalent, also used in conversation among sailors, is 'out to a clinch', referring to the steel forging in the cable locker to which the inboard end of the cable is shackled. A 'nipper' was a stopper upon a cable, and by a simple transference became the ship's boy by whom in former times, the stopper was worked. 'Loggerheads' were iron bars, used when hot for caulking seams with pitch — handy and dangerous weapons, apt to be snatched up in the heat of a mess-deck dispute. The process of incorporation still goes on. The submarine service is already adding slang terms to the English language, and no doubt aircraft-carriers and landing-craft will have their contributions to make.

The adaptation of sea terms for use ashore, however, is only one side of the story. The development of sailors' English has been a two-way process. Many words long used at sea were not invented by sailors. They belonged to the countryside from which the sailors came; and since sailors are conservative and sentimental, many good old country words, which have become old-fashioned ashore, are still in use, with special meanings, at sea. Sailors' talk has helped to preserve, as well as to enlarge, the English language. This aspect of the matter did not escape Admiral Smyth (every student of sailors' English must return to that almost omniscient nautical 'commonplacer'); he rightly emphasized it in the introduction to his *Word-book*:

'In the "ancient and fish-like" terms that brave Raleigh derived

from his predecessors, many epithets must have resulted from ardent recollections of home and those at home, for in a ship we find:

Apeak	Crowfoot	Hound	Shoe
Apron	Crow's nest	Jewel	Shutters
Astay	Crown	Lacings	Sister
Bonnet	Diamond	Martingale	Stays
Braces	Dog	Mouse	Stirrup
Bridle	Driver	Nettle	Tiller
Cap	Ear-rings	Pins	Truck
Catharpins	Eyes	Puddings	Truss
Catheads	Fox	Rabbit	Well
Cat's-paw	Garnet	Riband	Whelps
Cradle	Goose-neck	Saddle	Whip
Crib	Goose-wing	Sheaves	Yard
Cot	Horse	Sheets	Yoke'
Crinoline	Hose	Sheep-shank	

These simple words have all suffered a sea-change, but have not thereby become rich or strange. They are symbols of the kinship between sailor, farmer and craftsman which, many times in its history, has stood this country in good stead. Sailors' English is not a mere specialists' jargon. It is a vital and living branch of English; a speech of clearness, precision and — for all its oddities — of beauty. Conrad, who of all sailor-authors understood its beauty the best, compared it to an anchor — 'a forged piece of iron, admirably adapted to its end; and nautical language is an instrument wrought into perfection by ages of experience, a flawless thing for its purpose'. It was of nautical *English* that this adopted Englishman was thinking; for he added, a little later: 'If I had not written in English, I would not have written at all.'

EARLY TRANSATLANTIC MIGRATION OF POLITICS

ROY F. NICHOLS

CREATING self-government in a far-off wilderness was a new experience for Europeans. The discovery of the Western Hemisphere brought many new challenges to the inventiveness of Western civilization and this political problem was not the least of those tests of social ingenuity. The English colonists and their promoters were the most successful and the most original in their achievements and, within the first decades of the seventeenth century they not only provided the necessary colonial political machinery but they laid the foundation of American democracy.

These English colonists came to America equipped with a tradition of thought and action and with practical operative training in participation in English government. Just how effective this tradition and this experience would prove in dealing with wilderness conditions was one of the unknowns in the process of the transit of civilization across the sea. Many modifications, it was soon discovered, were imperative, and the nature of these changes and the necessity therefor, made important contributions to the evolution of democracy.

The average Englishman who came to America in the seventeenth century had had practical experience in the art of self-government in two realms. Were he a resident of a borough or city he might be a freeman familiar with certain charter privileges or liberties which the municipal corporation enjoyed and he might also have been a member of its governing bodies or had some part in choosing them. However most British boroughs at this time had become close corporations dominated by local oligarchy. Mayor and aldermen filled vacancies in the borough governments and when bodies of citizens were called together according to ancient custom to advise and ratify, these citizens were generally taken from selected groups, like the liverymen of the city mysteries. However there was a not-forgotten tradition of democratic self-assertion which had been more prevalent at the end of the Middle Ages. On the other hand, were he resident outside of a borough he would have had little exercise in government save perhaps as a member of a jury, for the shires were ruled by the bench of the Justices of the Peace separately or at Assizes and by the Sheriff and Coroner.

The second level of experience was with the choice of members of parliament. On this level he might have voted for representatives

of the boroughs or for the knights of the shire. In either case he had learned the methods of choice peculiar to those two types of representative. The borough representatives were generally elected by a combination of the oligarchic borough government and the substantial burgesses in complicated systems of nomination and choice. But in the shires conditions were different. All freeholders worth forty shillings or more might vote. On days of election all such through the shire were to proceed to the hall in the shire town and when names were proposed, the vote was *viva voce*. However if the will of the crowd, many of whom often could not get into the small shire halls, could not be ascertained by the volume of the shouts, then the sheriff must take the vote by poll, that is swear each one as to his property and then take down his vote. Having thus given his voice for a member he would likewise in all probability follow some at least of the working of the law-making authority of a bicameral legislature such as provided by Lords and Commons sitting as Parliament.

Besides this definitely political experience the English colonist might have had other training which would contribute to his skill in government. Were he a loyal Church of England man he was acquainted with the functions of the parish vestry and may himself have seen service in one of those close corporations which set the parish rate and in other ways gained experience in managing communal affairs. Were he a dissenter he would have known some form of presbyterian or congregational church organization, he would have learned particularly of covenants or agreements for the association of like-minded believers into forms of self-government. Finally he might have been a stockholder in a chartered commercial company and have attended general courts or quarterly meetings of stockholders and read the political provisions of corporate Charters.

American political institutions were to be created by those with such training who were coming across the seas at a time when the political party was beginning to operate, when partisanship was beginning to figure in the choice of members of parliament and in the law making process which was their main charge, and when political tactics were being developed. Elections to Parliament in many instances were still but formal meetings of a few freeholders to ratify the choice of the local aristocracy for one of themselves for parliament. On the other hand many times it was quite to the contrary. The English take naturally to a two-party contest. It may be because in its early history the island was invaded so frequently that there were naturally two parties, the invaded and the invaders, the conquerors and the conquered. At any rate there were also surviving from feudal days long-standing family rivalries or feuds. Members of leading local families vied for the honour of representing the

shire, oftentimes bringing into these contests the strength and venom of more general local feuds of long standing. Each family would marshal its retainers as in the days of the Wars of the Roses and march to the shire town for election day. Each side would attempt to secure the available lodgings in the inns and endeavour to get their men into the shire hall first. Then each would endeavour to shout the other down in the *viva voce*. Their tactics have often quite a modern ring.

Also during the Tudor days, the religious issue had become political. Henry VIII split his country into Protestant and Catholic and the efforts of his daughter Mary to restore Catholicism deepened the breach. When Elizabeth came to the throne there were two parties, Catholic and Protestant. In her reign Protestantism began to fragmentize. The Puritans were adept at political organization. They began to seek candidates for Parliament. Within Parliament, under the leadership of Wentworth and Strickland, they began to form a bloc. This bloc consulted together, sat together in the House and voted together. Some of its leaders were imprisoned for opposing the Queen's more Anglican measures, but in the end they secured the recognition of the right of a Parliamentary minority to be seen and heard. Her Majesty's Opposition came to be an accepted if not an appreciated reality. The Queen could be criticized freely without fear of direct reprisal. This religio-political partisanship was well-known to many of the colonists and was a valuable part of their political education for the creation of new institutions.

Finally these colonial political institutions were to be created at a time when England was undergoing a most significant transformation of political thinking, perhaps the most significant in many centuries. Both the success of the Tudors as monarchs and the English Reformation had worked together to emphasize the concept of the inviolability of constituted authority. It was wicked to resist the monarch for God commanded obedience to the civil rulers, 'Render unto Caesar'. Luther and Henry VIII were much of one mind. But there were signs of contrary doctrine.

During the ill-starred reign of Mary, many Protestant zealots had left England and sought the continent. Here in Switzerland and Germany they met Calvin and Knox and embraced ideas of church polity which did not harmonize with those of the ecclesiastical politicians who before and after Mary were designing the Church of England. Their principal sanction was the concept of the infallible authority of scripture. The laws of God were therein contained and were for the guidance of men. Civil magistrates were to see to it that the churches based on these laws were free to enforce them. Some of these Protestants failed to find in the law of God sanctions for the elaborate episcopal authority which the architects of the

Church of England were using as their keystone. They pondered this question of organization during the early years of Elizabeth with varying results. While Elizabeth and her political advisers were putting the finishing touches on the Church of England between 1558 and 1571 they encountered opposition from these church leaders which took various forms.

Some wished to return to primitive Christianity and establish churches such as were described in the Book of the Acts, they were believers in independent, self-governing congregations. Others wanted a Presbyterian form in which the ministers in associations or classes would rule the church somewhat as John Knox had organized the Church of Scotland. This produced a theory stated by Cartwright and Travers at the University of Cambridge who invoked scripture to demonstrate that episcopacy was not in the law of God and therefore civil government could not rightfully establish such. Civil government was to establish and protect a scriptural church but there its ecclesiastical authority ended.

This concept Richard Hooker in his *Ecclesiastical Polity* hastened to deny. In so doing he descanted on the nature of political society in terms resembling a theory of social contract and condemned the Puritan claim to a right to disobey the commands of the state church as a denial of political obligation. He denounced any right of forcible rebellion. The Puritans on their part, though they had no faith in human reason and would not admit any authority divorced from scripture or that reason without scriptural obedience could get anywhere, nevertheless would neither rebel nor advocate use of force. Instead they boded from within and in as many parishes as possible modified the service and maintained exasperating independence of the bishops, leaving it to a few Congregational extremists like the Brownists actually to defy the law.

Thus on the eve of the migration the predominant theory was obedience to royal authority but the philosophy of scriptural inerrancy which was maintained by Puritan Divines had in it the germs of appeal to higher authority and Hooker's effort to refute it had brought the idea of social contract and human reason into the picture.

These theoretical concepts were strengthened by the events of the seventeenth century which were occurring simultaneously with the first period of colonization. The coming of the Stuarts brought a Scotsman and his political associates to power. James I understood little of the spirit of English politics although he was learned in the letter of the prevailing Tudor concept of the supremacy of the Crown and the wickedness of resistance to constituted authority. The Tudors had been sufficiently shrewd to use Parliament as an instrument of their own supremacy. James on the other hand prated

vacuously of the Divine Right of Kings and in effect summoned Parliament and the Church to acknowledge unquestioned the supreme authority of his royal will.

When the Stuarts James I and Charles I had shown their incapacity to promote English prowess, when they had evoked anti-Catholic antipathies by the marriage of Charles to a French princess, when a rising cost of living had pinched many country gentlemen living on fixed incomes, when Charles endeavoured to increase tax burdens arbitrarily in order to play expensive but ineffective international politics, and when his ecclesiastical politicians began their efforts to put screws on non-conforming and semi-independent parishes, only one result had been possible in England. Tactics which had been used by the Barons in King John's day, by those who had curbed Edward II and Richard II, by Jack Cade and Wat Tyler, were withdrawn from the archives of tradition and put to use again. This time the quill was the first instrument and such documents as the Petition of Right (1628), the Grand Remonstrance (1641) and the Agreement of the People (1647) laid down new political theory. In the name of the traditional rights and liberties of the English people, arbitrary power was denounced, definite checks upon royal behaviour were formulated and the right of resistance against arbitrary government attributed to the people. This reformation and elaboration of ancient custom was enforced by the sword. Charles I went to his death and a Commonwealth was established. This violent break with tradition proved too radical and in less than a dozen years the Stuarts were welcomed back again on the understanding that they had been educated in English constitutional tradition.

Charles II undoubtedly had, but his brother James was less aware of reality. His greatest error was in raising the religious issue, for in the blindness of his faith in Catholicism he lost sight of the nature of his people and their dislike for Papists. Within three years he had fled to France. This time the British political leaders were going to leave nothing to chance, they had welcomed Charles II back with only the vaguest tacit understanding as to the relation of King to the realm. Now in 1688 it was to be put in writing, framed into law, into law based upon reformulated political theory.

Between the writing of the Puritan Revolution of 1628-49 and 1688 there had been further lucubration. The Roundheads had developed an intensely narrow didacticism which was but a reflection of the attitude of many of their pastors and the communicants of their churches. In religious language so much of the letter, the literal interpretation of the scriptures, was killing the spirit. The educated leaders were splitting hairs and wasting their time in bootless argument over meanings of texts, thereby neglecting their high calling of preaching Christianity.

A reaction to this narrow and pedantic prostitution of religious leadership came from the great intellectual centre of Puritanism in the University of Cambridge. The Fellows in the colleges had been re-reading Plato and drinking at the new-sprung fountain of Descartes. One Sunday, John Sherman rose in the Chapel at Trinity and preached a sermon, 'A Greek in the Temple'. God had not confined His revelation of Himself to the pages of scripture. God was expressing Himself 'in the vast and ample volume of the world'. 'As truths supernatural are not contradicted by reason, so neither surely is that contradicted by Scripture which is dictated by right reason.' Nature and reason were instruments of God to show man the way of life. Of greater fame was Benjamin Whichcote, student at Emmanuel, and later Provost of King's, who for many years was the preacher in one of the parish churches of Cambridge; he became the Socrates of these Cambridge Platonists.

They were to follow reason which was the Candle of the Lord. Religious faith was founded not so much upon documentary evidence as upon experience. God as universal love and holy affection could only be known by those who experienced love and affection towards their fellow men and developed thereby a happy union of souls with God. Like Plato they stressed morals, conduct. The mind of God was the home of truth and the seat of ideas. Of the ideas of God, man's reason had an intuitive and certain perception particularly of moral ideas. Thus reason was brought back into respectability and could be invoked as man's guide in his search for truth and the road of righteous conduct. In this fashion the Cambridge Platonists called the pedantic Puritans to account in the very seat of Puritanism within the courts of Emmanuel. Reason could discover God by learning the laws of nature which were God's revelation to man. So they challenged the infallibility of scripture and of the church and brought forth reason as a spark of divine light which produced an inward apprehension of Duty and God. Away with cant, dialectics and the tyranny of the written words of ancient revelation! Man through reason might discover God continuously, and by union with Him in nature confound the Puritan concept of man as fundamentally wicked.

An Oxford man was delving into the politics of the day and it fell to his task to justify in theory the overthrow of the Stuarts in 1688. He had associations with the Cambridge Platonists and their doctrines did much for him. From them and from Richard Hooker he drew ideas and forth came the fine flower of rational justification of revolution against tyrannical authority. Man had perceived that his original state of nature was intolerably chaotic so by use of his reason he grasped the fact that he could introduce order. All men were created equal, reason told him, and were endowed with certain

inalienable rights among which were life, liberty and the power to hold and enjoy property. But these rights could not be enjoyed while man lived lawlessly in a state of nature. Therefore these equal, intelligent, rational individuals, each conscious of his capacity and his dignity, had united to form a social compact establishing a government for the purpose of keeping order. The authority of this government and its ultimate sanction was the consent of the governed. But if the government disregarded the wishes and the rights of the governed, then the governed might overthrow the government.

Thus was the individual, the rational individual who through reason learned these laws of the Creator, in a position to maintain his rights and his dignity. This was the high point of individualism, of equalitarian participation in authority. It was during this transition in political theory from the dogma of the supremacy and unchallengeable permanency of constituted authority, to the supremacy of the social compact that the colonials migrated to America. And they were by no means unmindful of the change. In fact they may be said to have been thinking of America as a political laboratory working on the necessary experiments to discover the processes necessary to produce the change.

Such was the political equipment of the colonists as they set out on the terrible journey to shores so far away where lay the possibility of so much fulfilled desire. With this equipment they undertook to fashion government in the new world. The experience of certain of these colonial ventures illustrates the process.

The first planners for America were more interested in commercial success. Those merchants, soldiers and gentlemen from London and the outports who projected the first ventures thought in terms of business organization and incorporated chartered companies. The form of management chosen was cumbersome. A committee of the promoters, in co-operation with Crown officers, was to invite adventurers to go to America to join in raising or procuring the products which were to be sent back to Europe. They would be given opportunity to share in the profits and thus increase their fortunes. The local management of this trading post was to be in the hands of a council chosen by the London promoters who were to operate under instruction from London.

When this plan was put into operation in 1607 in Virginia, two truths became shortly all too apparent. The three thousand miles of the Atlantic Ocean made the colony too distant for efficient management from London. It took at least four and more often six months for an exchange of correspondence and in that length of time conditions usually had changed and the directives arrived out of date. The second truth was the very plain one that a committee, particularly one operating in a new venture, in a sickly climate, with

debilitated and discouraged men, is not an effective governing body.

The result was first of all no profits for the promoters and secondly disputes in London over methods of operation. After seventeen years of experimentation and dispute between Crown and promoters, a pattern of political operation was achieved. The company soon abandoned the committee form of government and after trying a manager or governor in whom was vested wide powers, they decided on an epoch-making experiment. Partly as an advertising inducement, they set up a miniature parliament in Virginia, a House of Burgesses. Each town or hundred or plantation was authorized to send two burgesses to the capital to levy taxes and make laws in co-operation with the Company's governor and his council. Five years later, the political policies of the leaders of the company brought them afoul of King James I with the result that the Crown took legal action to destroy the company and assume control of the colony. Thereafter the King appointed its governor. Thus a definite pattern had been achieved.

The government of royal governor, his council and the House of Burgesses was quite apparently King, Lords and Commons in miniature. Although the instructions from England prescribed that the colonists 'imitate and follow the policy of the form of government, laws, customs and manner of tryal' used at home it seems apparent that procedure was much more liberal. It seems as though all male inhabitants, including even indentured servants, of seventeen years or above could vote. The suffrage was not confined to forty shilling freeholders. The voting took place in the 'towns, boroughs and hundreds' and was *viva voce* or by show of hands. Governors or chiefs of particular plantations probably had a good deal to say as to who should go to the Assembly from their bailiwick. The government, in general, was carried on by men of social standing. The servant class was not rising to any political heights. Thus there was the British combination of class influence and democracy which was current in England.

The second colonial experiment was a radically different one. A small congregation of Separatists sent a part of their number to America under peculiar circumstances. London capitalists were interested in finding steady, earnest, reliable people to undertake the difficult task of setting up wilderness posts. A number of Separatists had refused compliance with Elizabethan laws for religious conformity and had fled to Holland. They, however, were patriotic Englishmen who wished for a spot in the homeland where they would be free to worship as they pleased. After much negotiation some of them agreed to go to America to operate a concession for the London promoters. As there were not enough of them, others who were not of their religious persuasion were enlisted and they

all set sail eventually upon the famous *Mayflower*. The concession was to be located on land belonging to the London Company and to be part of 'Operation Virginia'.

The leaders of this venture were the pastor and elders of a congregation and their concept of political ordering was that of a community of believers managing their affairs in congregational meeting. At first they seemed to think that their plans needed no formulation and that all would be simple. However, two complications arose. In the first place they were blown off their course and arrived at a part of America not within the bounds of the London Company. In the second place they realized that those among them who were not of their religious persuasion were not going to think as they did about many things. Therefore before they landed they came to the conclusion that they must formulate a document of political agreement.

This Mayflower Compact signed by all responsible adults was an agreement to form a 'body politic' in which all would abide by the common will. This 'body politic', congregational assembly, town meeting, or what you will, then chose annually a governor and later a council or board of assistants. All could vote who were admitted as freemen, and substantial, steady men were so admitted, probably mostly church members. When Plymouth colony, as it was called, grew so that various other towns were established, the old congregational meeting with a ruling council of elders was succeeded by a law-making body consisting of representatives from the towns, who chose the governor and assistants and made the laws. Thus there was an executive and what amounted to a bicameral legislature, again somewhat reminiscent of King, Lords and Commons.

The third experiment was, like the second, primarily religious in origin but more complicated in conception and operation. A group of substantial Puritans feeling the hostility of the Anglican hierarchy and the pinch of a rising cost of living began to contemplate a move which would provide religious and social independence and greater economic resources. They therefore formed a chartered company as for business enterprise but really designed to create a Puritan society where those of that mind might construct a Holy Commonwealth. The Puritan stockholders of this corporation, the Massachusetts Bay Company, decided to migrate in a body carrying their charter with them. There would be no London Managers as in the case of the Virginia Company. In 1630 they completed these plans and more than a thousand recruits crossed the sea with them.

At first the stockholders through their general court or stockholders' meeting planned to place the government in the hands of a so-called governor and board of assistants. However, the stockholders were so few in number and the Massachusetts Bay colonists so numerous that it soon became apparent that so small a group

could not maintain control. Freemen therefore were presently admitted, but usually only church members were so privileged. They attended the general courts and participated both in the election of officers and the making of law. However, as the number of towns increased it became increasingly difficult for the freemen to come to the general courts so the towns demanded a representative system which was granted. Thereafter representatives of the towns made up the lower house of the general court with the governor and board of assistants functioning as in Plymouth. Gone was the chartered company government of stockholders, gone in part was the government of the elders. In its place was the ever more familiar pattern of executive and bicameral legislature.

At the same time, yet another type of colonial experiment was in the making. One of the Calvert family who had become a Catholic had been interested in colonial projects for some twenty years without much success, financial or otherwise. Now he took advantage of a favourable political relationship with King Charles I to try again. This time his objective was to combine a business project with an effort to make a refuge for his Catholic fellow-religionists who legally could not be said to exist in England and were therefore somewhat at a disadvantage. He secured from the King a charter, not for a company as had the London Company promoters, but for an individual grant to himself.

In other words Calvert, or Lord Baltimore, as he was about to be styled, wanted to establish feudalism in America. The charter which he received was in fact largely a feudal document giving him the right to establish a domain like that of the Bishop of Durham in which he was to have power to legislate with the advice of the local landholders. He proceeded to rule his 'barony' by appointing a governor who was to call together the citizens and propose a set of laws to them for their assent. But America was not hospitable to feudalism. The assembled freemen were not interested in merely listening to proposals of the proprietor and, after giving their assent, going home. They were more positive in their attitudes and wanted the right to initiate legislation as well as approve prepared programmes. So on the insistence of the inhabitants, feudalism gave way to the law making of a characteristic legislative body. A representative lower house of assembly chosen by the landholders joined the Governor and his council in the rule of the colony.

This same process was repeated again four times. During the Restoration proprietary grants were given to the Duke of York and certain supporters of the Stuart fortunes. New York went to the Duke of York after its capture by Colonel Richard Nichols. New Jersey became the property of Sir George Carteret and Lord Berkeley. Carolina was granted first to several proprietors close to Charles

II. Pennsylvania was a payment to William Penn and his heirs, creditors of the Crown.

The types of government which these proprietors proposed showed the trend. While the Duke of York attempted to manage the affairs of the Dutch inhabitants of his new colony without a legislature none of the other proprietors had similar hardihood. They adopted the now prevailing pattern and their appointed governors with their councils worked with the popularly elected houses in making laws. True, the Carolina proprietors essayed a paper feudalism with ranks and conditions of men and Penn sought to be benevolently paternal, but not for long. Governor and legislature like King and Commons was the English formula strong enough to command almost a uniformity.

In organizing town and borough government, county and local units, British experience was again the guide. To be sure there was little of the close corporation oligarchy in the colonial cities, towns and boroughs; no one in that free environment would accept such distinctions. But the cities were chartered, and freemen were admitted who elected those who bore rule over them. Nor was it forgotten that the ancient custom of British burghesses was to speak their minds freely and to value the 'liberties' contained in their charters. In New England the town government was closely patterned after the congregational meeting and its political customs. The town meeting in which all citizens came together and deliberated in their tax levying and ordinance making became a great institution. In several colonies, the British county with its board of justices, sheriff and coroner was taken over and for lesser units the parish was adopted, ruled by its vestry. Here the justices were presumably chosen by the governor, but in effect they formed self-perpetuating boards and the parish vestries enjoyed like privileges of self-perpetuation. But these were institutions more of the aristocratic southern colonies.

These various and surprisingly uniform patterns of executive and legislative organizations did not exhaust the political achievements of the American colonists. That same spirit of division and argument culminating in counting of voices and acquiescence in the will of the majority was transplanted to the New World. Faction first appeared on the initial boatload of immigrants when Edward Maria Wingfield and the redoubtable Captain John Smith fell out and their friends took sides in Virginia. This rivalry led to a disruption of the council, expulsion, arrests, banishment and other high-handed procedures. In the Puritan colony of Massachusetts there was dissension even among the elect. Roger Williams and Mrs. Hutchinson were banished and with their followers established a self-governing colony called Rhode Island, while a peaceable secession of the

Church at Newtown (Cambridge) in Massachusetts with others who did not care for the rule of the Boston clerics led to the creation of another self-governing experiment, Connecticut. The latter drew up a constitution-like document called the Fundamental Orders and both Connecticut and Rhode Island sought and obtained charters from England regularizing their informal methods of creation. In each instance a popularly elected Assembly would choose a governor and his assistants and thus follow the pattern.

In Virginia there was quarrelling between the King's governor and the people, the latter denouncing arbitrary acts of the former as violating their rights and privileges as set down in the charter and recorded in their memories stored with English experience. When the landholding magnates along the Atlantic seaboard refused to give adequate protection to back-countrymen against the aboriginal inhabitants upon the frontier, an enterprising Virginian, Nathaniel Bacon, led the outraged farmers to attempt a rebellion against a very unpopular and arbitrary governor, an attempt called Bacon's Rebellion.

In New York the determination of the Duke of York to rule without granting a legislature eventuated in another revolt led by Jacob Leisler in the confused days of the Great Revolution in England. These were the more spectacular incidents, but there were those of lesser note in almost every colony. Rivalries between older settlements with well-established power and outlying settlements which were given little share in government led to vigorous contests. Differences between established churches and those of other or no faith likewise reflected English quarrels. Non-English immigrants were often in opposition to the English stocks. Scotch-Irish and Irish brought antagonisms from the British Isles. More particularly, to be noted, however, were the contests between the popularly elected legislative bodies who controlled the colonial purse and the governors whether appointed by Crown or Proprietor. These contests followed very definitely the pattern of checking the King which had become time-honoured in England.

All this meant that the English colonists were making extensive use of their experiences in the homeland and of its traditions. In turn these became American experiences and traditions. In one sense it can be said that the colonists did not grow away from their English ways. Rather they clung to them tenaciously, they translated them into colonial experience and when one English pattern did not work they turned to another. They found at each crisis some English pattern suitable to their needs, till at length in the latter part of the eighteenth century they found the methods and justifications even for their final break with England provided by English experience itself. The whole ammunition for the American Revolution was

supplied freely by Britain to her distant colonies. The Revolution occurred in part at least because the British colonists were so British.

Aptitude for self-government and politics migrated with the colonists and remained a permanently potent force in shaping their political institutions in the new world. The richness of British experience in maintaining the rights and liberties of self-government was the generous portion which Britain bestowed upon her colonies.

JOSEPH CONRAD'S HERO: 'FIDELITY' OR 'THE CHOICE OF NIGHTMARES'

DOUGLAS HEWITT

JOSEPH CONRAD's question: 'Who are those fellows who write in the Press? Where do they come from?' typifies his disgust at the constant misunderstanding which labelled him 'morbid', 'Slav', or — worst insult for him — 'writer of sea-stuff'. It is the more curious that in the latter part of his life he should have written so much which obscures the significant qualities of his early work. In particular he offered in his 'Familiar Preface' to *A Personal Record* the statement which has often been taken as a clue to the interpretation of all his works: 'Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas: so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests, notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity.'

Faith in Fidelity may be the light which can guide us through *Chance* or *Victory* or *The Rover*, but it is soon obscured in *Heart of Darkness* and other early works, where he treats of ideas and themes which are far from simple and to which such naïve moralizing is irrelevant. It is therefore essential to appreciate the peculiar qualities of these books and not to read them in the frame of mind of his later work.

1

The difference in setting between Conrad's novels and stories and those of most of his predecessors would be too obvious to mention were it not that it is significant of far more than the merely external.

The main character of a story of Conrad — Lord Jim, Captain Whalley, the narrator of *The Secret Sharer* — inhabits, typically, the self-contained world of a ship, a camp, a jungle village, and of this world he is the centre; the other characters are orientated towards him, dependent on him both emotionally and physically. In this he resembles far more the hero of tragedy than the central figure of most nineteenth-century novels, where the writer's aim is usually to connect his story as closely as possible with the social scene, and where the 'hero', though the centre of the incidents described, is not the centre of the whole world presented to us. Even during Julien Sorel's sojourn in the seminary, for instance, we are reminded from time to time that life goes on outside. Conrad has no such aim.

Moreover, as Conrad's hero so dominates his 'world', his inner situation is mirrored in the external events and relationships, and is

thus of vital significance for the other personages. The life which surrounds him is at the same time perfectly convincing in 'naturalistic' terms and also an expression of his mental and moral plight. Gentleman Brown, for example, whose visit precipitates the crisis at the end of *Lord Jim*, is no chance intruder on Jim's isolation; he is as inherent in the situation within Jim as is Banquo's ghost in that of Macbeth. And the reaction of Jim to his problem, embodied in this intruder, affects the lives of all the other inhabitants of the village.

But the force of these stories does not come merely from Conrad's skill in placing his protagonists in situations which raise acutely the issues with which they have to deal; it is far more than a matter of 'situations'. The power of *Youth*, which could so easily have been a story of adventure and nothing more, comes from the degree to which the imagery of the work mirrors the mind of its narrator, and is yet purely 'natural', so that, without any sense of strain, the emotional experience recollected by Marlow in the tranquillity round the mahogany table is given a validity greater than the mood of an old and reminiscing man. Conrad's symbolism, in short, is inherent in the stories. The silver of the mine in *Nostromo*, to take one very clear example, is both the factual reason for the activities of the characters and the symbol of the corruption which destroys them.

2

Such coherence, however, guarantees nothing but a concentrated and well-constructed story; the issues involved may be — and in some of his later stories are — relatively superficial. But most of his early works are profoundly disturbing because the central characters are confronted by what, in *Lord Jim*, he calls: '... that side of us which, like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge', and because of a sense of inadequacy or guilt which comes from this confrontation. Moreover, this awareness cannot be discounted as a vague and passing mood of doubt or self-questioning, because it raises sharp and immediate issues for the protagonists, whose choice of belief and action is fraught with such consequence for the other personages.

It is notable that the later works can be more easily discussed in terms of 'the problems facing the characters'; the early work can to some extent be elucidated; it cannot be paraphrased. We must always consider the total effect of a work like *Heart of Darkness*, where the dominant imagery of the early stories — that of 'darkness' — reaches its culmination.

All commentators point out that *Heart of Darkness* is largely autobiographical, but, having noted this, it is generally assumed that the narrator Marlow, who plays the part in the book which Conrad

played in the actual events, is merely the transparent medium through which we see the physical and moral darkness of the strange country. In fact, the book is more concerned with the effect of the country and of Kurtz, the 'hollow man', on Marlow; as Marlow himself says: 'It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me — and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough, too — and pitiful — not extraordinary in any way — not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.'

One deviation from autobiography is typical; there were other powers at Stanley Falls — the Arabs a few miles up the river — but in the story Kurtz is alone, with powers of life and death, worshipped by the natives as a god. Conrad emphasizes from the first, however, that he is not alone in evil. Marlow comes on the scene after a long time at sea, and we feel him to represent, in his opposition to the 'pilgrims' of trade, who hope that their rival Kurtz may die, the forces of 'decency', what we might almost (following Conrad's later idealizations) call the 'Master Mariner virtues'. He is confronted on his journey, which is 'like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares', by events which combine the horrible, the ridiculous and the wicked. The strange country overwhelms his senses, and when he has met and seen the full horror of Kurtz we reach the keyphrase — he feels himself to have a choice between the 'pilgrims' and Kurtz, the 'choice of nightmares'. It is echoed again when he awakens to find that Kurtz has left the ship, whence he has been taken, and has gone back to the natives. 'The fact is,' he says, 'I was completely unnerved by a sheer blank fright, pure abstract terror, unconnected with any distinct shape of physical danger. What made this emotion so overpowering was — how shall I define it? — the moral shock I received, as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me unexpectedly . . . I did not betray Mr. Kurtz — it was ordered I should never betray him — it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice . . . to this day I don't know why I was so jealous of sharing with anyone the peculiar blackness of that experience.'

Finally, when, after Kurtz's death, Marlow believes that he himself will die, we are shown most explicitly how inadequate his naïve beliefs are to explain to him the shock of this confrontation by the evil and his acceptance of the 'unforeseen partnership' which the 'pilgrims' impute to him. 'I did not go to join Kurtz there and then,' he says, ' . . . I remained to dream the nightmare out to the end, and to show my loyalty once more . . . I was within a hair's breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation

that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness . . . And it is not my own extremity I remember best . . . No! It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through . . . It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last . . .'

By the end of the story the darkness which had existed in the breast of Kurtz and in the dark continent seems to cover the whole world. The concluding image extends its sway: 'Marlow ceased . . . The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky — seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness.' Conrad's mention elsewhere of how he introduced the word 'silver' into the last paragraph of *Nostromo*, even though he feared spoiling it, because the real hero of the book is the silver, is enough indication that 'darkness' is here for some more significant reason than merely to round off the story and lead the reader back to its setting.

Conrad said that he was very aware that the three stories which make up the volume *Youth* represent three ages of man, and in all of them this theme of 'darkness' is present. *Youth* itself is the prelude, and behind the eagerness, the voracity of youth, is the waiting shadow. Marlow, again the narrator, says of the fire at sea: 'Oh the glamour of youth! Oh the fire of it, more dazzling than the flames of the burning ship, throwing a magic light on the wide earth, leaping audaciously to the sky, presently to be quenched by time, more cruel, more pitiless, more bitter than the sea — and like the flames of the burning ship surrounded by an impenetrable night.'

The darkness in the third story, *The End of the Tether*, is primarily physical — the blindness of Captain Whalley. Something of an older Marlow, 'with age he had put on flesh a little, had increased his girth like an old tree presenting no symptom of decay . . . conscious of his worth, and firm in his rectitude . . .' and so he trusts himself enough to enter into his partnership with Massy. But with the knowledge that he is no longer fit to command and yet that loyalty to his daughter demands it, he feels that 'even his own past of honour, of truth, of just pride, was gone. All his spotless life had fallen into the abyss.' The simple faith which he has expounded to the compassionate but disillusioned van Wyk collapses, and, like Marlow, he finds that the experience casts 'a kind of light'. 'In the steadily darkening

universe a sinister clearness fell upon his ideas. In the illuminating moments of suffering he saw life, men, all things, the whole earth with all her burden of created nature, as he had never seen them before.'

In some of the early work the attack on the naïve virtues is more direct. In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* he portrays the crew's pity for the sick negro as 'the latent egoism of tenderness to suffering', which makes them 'highly humanized, tender, complex, excessively decadent . . .' In *Nostromo* it is the fidelity of Don Carlos Gould to the memory of his father and his belief in a 'liberal' future for Costaguana which makes him link himself with the American financier and pin all his faith on the silver of the mine. From this desire for 'a serious and moral success' comes the situation of which it is said that 'the time approaches when all the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily on the people as the barbarism, cruelty and misrule of a few years back'. That fidelity, unquestioned as to its origins and objects, is no fit object for adoration seems obvious enough, but it is stressed because this questioning of assumptions which here so preoccupies Conrad is strangely absent in his later works.

The questioning of the basis of our emotions and values is most explicit in *Falk*. Speaking of Falk's love for the girl, of his earlier cannibalism and of this primitive man's feeling of guilt, the narrator reflects: 'He wanted to live. He had always wanted to live . . . I think I saw then the obscure beginning, the seed germinating in the soil of an unconscious need, the first shoot of that tree bearing now for a mature mankind the flower and the fruit, the infinite gradation in shades and in flavour of our discriminating love. We are in his case allowed to contemplate the foundation of all the emotions — that one joy which is to live, and the one sadness at the root of the innumerable torments.'

3

With such an equivocal attitude towards the emotions upon which men erect systems of belief and behaviour, with such an awareness of the darkness which lies as well in the unexplored country of the mind as in the Congo basin, Conrad must have found it hard to rest in confidence on the power of 'fidelity' or of any other simple virtue. But after about 1909 this tension, often obviously painful, disappears from his work. In *Under Western Eyes* evil is given a local habitation in the Russia which he so hated. We look on, a little uncomprehending, at the strange torments of the Russian conscience and the Russian guilt; we are told that we do not share them. Yet it is strange to find the creator of Mr Kurtz writing in the person of his narrator — of whose judgments he clearly approves — '... this is a

Russian story for Western ears, which . . . are not attuned to certain tones of cynicism and cruelty, of moral negation, and even of moral distress already silenced at our end of Europe'.

It is when we come to *Chance*, his first great popular success, that we see most clearly the harm of this change. The good and the evil have been divided into two camps. Captain Anthony is a little too good for this world — indeed this is his only flaw — and his father-in-law is completely evil, separated from Anthony as Kurtz had never been separated from Marlow or Gentleman Brown from Jim. No amount of that technical skill which made Henry James praise the book as an example of how to make a story as difficult to tell as possible and which Conrad emphasized in his letters, can conceal that this is an evasion of all the awareness with which Conrad had previously, and often so painfully, grappled. 'Fidelity' is adequate here, for the perception of evil without has replaced that of evil within, and the central figure, released from his knowledge of evil and guilt and the consequence of this for others, develops all the uncriticized virtues of the idealized ship's captain. The hero of tragedy has been replaced by the hero of melodrama.

In *Victory* the case is as clear. Heyst's disillusion and nihilism are unrealized formulae which carry no conviction; his opponents have the monopoly of evil, which is, indeed, often overdrawn to the point of caricature, (as in Ricardo's: 'You infidel, you robber of churches! Next time I will rip you open from neck to heel, you carrion-eater!') Lena sees Ricardo as 'the embodied evil of the world', but this evil is entirely outside her; the slack rhetoric of the scene of her death reveals how blindly we are intended to take her to our hearts.

The measure of the change is also given in his comments on Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in a letter of 1912: 'It's terrifically bad and impressive and exasperating. Moreover, I don't know what D[ostoevsky] stands for or reveals, but I do know that he is too Russian for me. It sounds to me like some fierce mouthings from prehistoric ages. I understand the Russians have just "discovered" him. I wish them joy.' The resemblances between his early work and that of Dostoevsky are striking. Clearly *Under Western Eyes* owes a great ideal to *The Possessed*, but the relationship is wider and deeper than this very obvious link. The exploration of the darker aspects of our often 'idealistic' feelings in *Falk*, in *Nostromo*, in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, Marlow's 'unforeseen partnership' with Kurtz, the nightmare recognition of the responsibility of the seeming innocent in *The Secret Sharer* — all these remind us of Dostoevsky, most notably of Myshkin's knowledge of 'double motives', of Ivan Karamazov's questioning, of Kirillov's merciless but insane logic, and above all of that frequent presentation of a character accompanied by his obviously evil 'double', whose existence throws a light

on that character's own motives: Ivan Karamazov and Smerdyakov, Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov, Stavrogin and Pyotr Verhovensky. We cannot but feel that Conrad disliked Dostoevsky, not, as he said, because he was so foreign to him, but because they were so similar and also, perhaps, because he had turned away from the questions which Dostoevsky continued always to pose.

4

The moment of change, somewhere between *Nostromo* and *Under Western Eyes*, is marked by *The Secret Sharer*, written in 1909, a story which develops to the maximum the theme of the responsible man, the centre of his own 'world', bearing the knowledge of a compact with guilt which he does not fully understand; and Conrad treats this theme in a way and with a 'solution' at the end which it is difficult not to take as an allegory of his own development.

The narrator tells how, taking over his first command, a ship anchored in the gulf of Siam, his 'position was that of a stranger to the ship; and if all the truth must be told, I was somewhat of a stranger to myself . . . untried as yet by a position of the fullest responsibility'. From the first moment when he conceals Leggatt, the unknown fugitive who is being taken home to stand trial for killing a man, he feels 'a mysterious communication . . . established already between us two — in the face of that silent, darkened, tropical sea'. This feeling of communication grows stronger. After dressing Leggatt in one of his own sleeping-suits, he says, 'it was, in the night, as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a sombre and immense mirror'. He refers constantly to the fugitive as his 'other self'. The indefinable compact with guilt which we have seen in *Heart of Darkness* is clear in this story, and the responsible position of the man who feels it is far clearer. 'This,' he says, 'is not the place to enlarge upon the sensations of a man who feels for the first time a ship move under his feet to his own independent word. In my case they were not wholly unalloyed. I was not wholly alone with my command; for there was that stranger in my cabin. Or rather, I was not completely and wholly with her. Part of me was absent. That mental feeling of being in two places at once affected me physically as if the mood of secrecy had penetrated my very soul.'

Finally he arranges to let Leggatt swim ashore by sailing his ship as close as possible to one of the islands which they pass, knowing however that, as he says, 'all my future, the only future for which I was fit, would perhaps go irretrievably to pieces in any mishap to my first command'. They go so near that everybody else on board thinks that disaster is inevitable, but he has not miscalculated, and now he is free of the oppression of secrecy and guilt. 'Already the ship was drawing ahead. And I was alone with her. Nothing! No one in the

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world should stand now between us, throwing a shadow on the way of silent knowledge and mute affection, the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command.'

The economy of method and the tension of the story are beyond praise; the responsibility of the narrator is fully realized in physical terms, in his ship which he must endanger to exorcise his 'other self'. But the price is high. Despite the mention of the 'proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny' and of the joy of 'the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command', our thoughts follow with pity the fugitive going towards the savage island, and we wonder whether, his 'other self' gone, the captain is now so complete a man. If we may, for a moment, take this story as an allegory of Conrad's own choice, we may say that the price of peace is the abandonment of the knowledge of the compact with evil, of the sense of guilt and a reliance on the simple faiths of honesty and courage and fidelity to one's shipmates, which the earlier works have shown to be inadequate in themselves. Such reliance may be enough for the captain whose responsibility is to his ship, but, with his knowledge of the 'impenetrable darkness', Conrad the novelist had another responsibility.

BOOK REVIEWS

HOWARD SELSAM: *Socialism and Ethics*. Lawrence & Wishart, 10s. 6d. net.

The writings of true believers normally make sad reading, not merely because they are disfigured by arrogance, but because for many years now they have degenerated into the repetition of a formula: no other religion ever became so intellectually stagnant in so short a time. But what makes this book worth while, in spite of its troubled verbiage, its ignorance of history and its naive faith, is the absence from it of the usual sanctimonious arrogance: Professor Selsam (an American) is a quiet, reasonable writer, who propounds his doctrine in a civilized manner. His object is 'to show that socialism represents a fusion of objective social science and the highest ethical ideals of the ages'.

The good, he maintains, is what we need and desire; 'the needs and desires of men alone make a thing good'. This is a view which he attributes not only to Marx but also to Spinoza. He offers no analysis of this definition, and if we follow his argument I think we shall find ourselves encouraged to put 'desire' on one side and concentrate on 'need'. We begin, then, with a naturalistic ethical doctrine, not (unfortunately) convincingly argued, but stated on the authority of Marx and common sense. Every society sets up an ideal which incorporates its interpretation of human need, and the activities of a society, as approximations to this ideal, reveal this interpretation. We are concerned with two different sorts of society, the first of which is called 'Capitalist Society'. This is a society based upon the ownership of property by individuals, a society in which the means of production are owned privately and consequently one in which 'a factory is not built to make shoes because people want and need shoes. It is built because, people needing shoes, a profit can be made by producing them.' The master in this society is, alternatively, the owner of the means of production or 'the market' — it is not quite clear which. Now, what are the moral values of this society, what is its interpretation of human need? They will, of course, be the moral values of the 'masters', the dominant class. But if we consider the activities of this sort of society we find that its interpretation of human need has had the following remarkable results:

The death-rate drops steadily and the life span increases. Great plagues are as extinct as the dodo and the dinosaur. Many of the physical ills that have cursed humanity have been conquered, while others, such as blindness, deafness and bodily deformity have been alleviated. The majority of the population in capitalist countries are not only literate but also have a technical competence and at least a speaking acquaintance with some of the culture of the ages. In recent years the moving picture and the radio, in spite of their shortcomings, have brought not only recreation but the materials of culture to the great masses of people and even to the most outlying regions. Parks, playgrounds, beaches, camps and automobile travel have made healthful recreation possible for millions who knew no such thing only a generation ago, etc. etc.

This seems to Professor Selsam not at all a bad interpretation of human need; he finds these things good. Capitalist society, following its interpretation of human need, has, indeed, acquired 'the facilities for producing sufficient material goods for a decent life for all'. But there is a debit side to the account. These goods are not enjoyed by *all*, and they are uncertain: capitalism, so far from overcoming poverty, unemployment and war, actually causes and supports characteristically virulent forms of these evils. With all this tremendous advance, with almost unlimited productive forces at our disposal, there is a growing gap

between productive capacity and actual production, there is poverty in the midst of potential plenty. Indeed, so impressive are the evils of a capitalist society that it may be said to 'operate totally irrespective of human values' [real needs?]. This is not due to the malice of individual capitalists, it is the fault of the system. Marx predicted this crisis, and it has now appeared. Every man asks of the economy under which he lives that it shall satisfy his needs; the capitalist economy fails to do this for the vast majority with the certainty and the fullness that they demand.

This situation has inspired a new sort of society — that is, a new interpretation of human need (a new moral ideal) and a new structure of society to bring about and to embody the satisfaction of this need. This new sort of society is a Socialist Society, and we are lucky in having an example of it before our eyes in Russia. If a society could be established in which production were for need and not for profit, and if the need were that of 'the working class', then all the great but unfulfilled promise of capitalist society could be harvested. The operative 'need', the moral ideal, in this society is that of the 'organized workers', 'the vast majority', 'the people'. This, to the uninitiated, might appear to be a merely class interpretation of need and neither better nor worse than any other. But Professor Selsam has an answer to the difficulty:

'Here [he says] we have an apparent anomaly that causes mechanical-minded intellectuals no end of difficulty but that class-conscious workers and all who have learned to think dialectically can easily understand. The attempt to solve current problems by appealing to so-called universal moral truths, to the 'common good', to humanity in the abstract is in danger of being an idle gesture and even of beclouding the real issues. On the other hand, appeals to and actions in behalf of the working class, while giving superficially the appearance of being concerned with the good of only a part of humanity, turn out to be in fact the only true humanism. . . . The working class carries with it in its own *class* morality, the only true *human* ethics.'

The moral ideal, then, is the need of the majority, 'not because the goals of the working class are good in and of themselves, but rather because they are the sole means to general human progress and the widest human good'. And there is a further reason why the needs and desires of the 'working class' should be the operative needs and desires. Where 'need' is the need of a small class (as it is assumed to be in a capitalist society), there is no opportunity of determining and satisfying that need *scientifically*; need and desire fall apart and men desire what they do not need. But when the 'need' becomes the need of the masses (and no other need is recognized), this can be determined scientifically, satisfied economically by a standardized product, compulsorily supplied. It can be *proved* 'that such and such a dietary deficiency causes rickets'. 'Science can tell us what our people need and want and what would be good for them', and 'it is not too fantastic to suggest that there are cultural needs' which can be similarly determined and supplied in the same manner. In short, 'the use of science in determining values implies and requires a community of interest' such as exists only in the masses of a society. But we are warned that it would be a great mistake to suppose that socialism is an attempt 'to bring civilization down to the level of the barracks'.

Now, how far all this is orthodox doctrine is difficult to determine. It rests upon the absolute acceptance of some of the orthodox dogmas, such, for example, as the inevitable decline in the standard of living in a 'capitalist' society. But without inquiring into the inconsistencies of the argument, two observations may be made. First, the good life here is nothing other than the enjoyment by more and more people of more and more of everything: 'the ever-increasing development of all the productive forces of human society and the resultant

improved living standards of all people are at one and the same time the index of social evolution and the rational goal of mankind'. In short, this is the plausible ethics of productivity, distinguished from 'capitalism' only by being alleged to be more successful. So far as I am concerned it involves a revolting nothingness, which has only to be successful in order to reduce human life to absolute insignificance. Secondly, the 'socialist' society is presented here as a society in which only those desires are approved which all can satisfy at the same time: none shall have what all cannot enjoy. The desires of the masses (in so far as desire is allowed to appear at all) are to be the standard for everyone, and the result is a tyranny of the majority. Or, when 'need' is substituted for 'desire', the result is the tyranny of those who determine need, the 'scientists'. Of the two, any sane man would no doubt choose the former; but it is a desperate alternative.

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON: *Religion and Culture*. Sheed & Ward, 10s. 6d. net.

In these Gifford Lectures (delivered in Edinburgh in 1947) Christopher Dawson discusses the cultural upheaval that confronts the world today, in the light of his thesis that 'religion is the dynamic element in culture'. Broadly, the argument is that our contemporary culture is no more than the shell of an earlier culture whose religious foundations have either been ignored or renounced. Such a precariously sick civilization as this needs a new culture for its cure, nor will this be forthcoming without the vitalizing power of religion.

That 'wonderful flowering of culture and institutions which deserves the name of the medieval renaissance' (p. 201), followed by the 'revolutionary changes of the Reformation period' (p. 202) is an 'exceptionally clear example of the double role which religion plays in relation to culture' (p. 202): (a) as a *synthesizing* force, (b) as a *revolutionary* force. Culture, whether in times of stability or change, demands religion; nay more, religion is the *sine qua non* for their continuance. Even Comte, with all his deficiencies, was wise enough to see that *some* religion (even though it was no more than a 'Religion of Humanity') was needed if there was to be an 'enduring social order' (p. 106). But Western culture, having replaced priestly guardians by 'intellectuals', whose activities have in the main been *destructively* critical, has no longer the religious assets by which it can face up to, and overcome, the non-moral, inhuman, irrational forces of destruction which beset it. It has neither the stabilizing, nor the revolutionary, energies of religion, without which neither consolidation nor change, is secure. The half loaves of 'natural theology' or 'comparative religion' were better than no bread, but by their 'scientific' character heralded and foreshadowed the complete secularization of culture we see today. The 'new scientific culture is devoid of all positive spiritual content. It is a . . . complex of techniques . . . without a guiding spirit . . .' (p. 214). 'A culture of this kind is no culture at all' (p. 215).

What then shall be the cure? We need to recapture the experience of a transcendent God common to the most primitive cultures and highest religions alike. Not only will this safeguard a new culture but it will incidentally prevent comparative religion being 'lost in the maze of sociological relativity' (p. 62) and Natural Theology losing 'contact with religion as a historical fact' (p. 62).

If we are to ask how such an experience of the transcendent will influence the specific character of a particular society, Dawson would point out that amongst the world cultures at least three well-defined types have recurred: the Prophet, Priest and King. The Prophet has been 'a channel of communication with the divine world' (p. 83) and has proclaimed the divine will — the alternative to which has been man's frustration, showing itself in an 'unlimited will to power and destruction' (p. 83). The King or Lawgiver has been a personal embodiment of transcendent power. The Priest has been the central figure as one who linked

essentially the society and its gods. Further, the priesthood has been the religious pattern of a 'principle of social organization' which has brought the 'individual and incalculable activities of the prophet' (p. 89) into an ordered social hierarchy. In this connection Dawson argues that this need not make, nor has it made, the priest a focus of intolerance — no good missionary would destroy a primitive culture. Nor need 'priest' be interpreted narrowly. Dawson is quite ready to say that Matthew Arnold and Emerson were 'priests of culture' (p. 105).

Further, this experience of a transcendent God leads to a 'sacred science' and a 'sacred law'. The doctrine of the uniformity of Nature has grown from a 'simple and universal conviction' that 'the powers that rule the earth are governed . . . by a common principle of order' (p. 145). Again, in primitive society, the 'element of social control is provided by religion and ritual and magic' (p. 157) and so the Law does not only arise from social necessity, it also has a religious root. Lastly, there will be in a 'cultured society' an *individual* 'discipline of the mind and the spirit' (p. 175) demanded from all. Any religion of 'negation or pure contemplation' (p. 193) is thus utterly inadequate as an inspirer of culture, divorced as it is from either 'historical reality' or the 'social order', and hence from cultural creativity. Even though 'Confucianism is not a religion in the full sense' (p. 171) it is here that the 'spiritual power' has been more than elsewhere 'the principle of unity, continuity and moral leadership' (p. 172). There must be a 'return to [such] a unity — a spiritual integration of culture — if mankind is to survive' (p. 217) and this will mean an integration of the scientific outlook and a 'universal and transcendent religion'.

The book abounds in references to cultures and religions of all dates and places — Egypt, China, New Mexico, Central Africa, Greece and so on — and even if this makes it somewhat bewildering to the general reader, it succeeds in making him see how fundamental and far-reaching are the problems confronting civilization at the present day.

But it is as well that we should realize some of the fundamental questions Dawson does not touch. So far as I see, he brings no argument to move the irreligious — unless it is the inductive one, viz. that cultures of the past have had a religious basis. 'The cultures of the past have never been conceived as purely man-made orders' (p. 46). But what strength has an inductive argument of such a vague and comprehensive character? Why should a *habit* of the past bind us for the future? Of course, Dawson would say that it is more than a habit, but nowhere in the book does he justify such a claim: he seems content to assert and to exemplify it.

Again, if 'culture is an organized way of life' and 'involves common beliefs and common ways of thought', why should not scientific method and experiment be itself a 'culture'? Science is not merely technique — and science can surely be as cultural as any of the humanities: it has its hypotheses, and its faith, and no prejudice against 'stinks' should cause us to underestimate its character and activities. Further, on the definition just given, and to raise the question of the previous paragraph again, why should any culture *necessarily* be religious? As preaching to the converted, who see religion as essentially the response of a fully integrated life, Dawson is excellent; but he says nothing by way of apologetic to 'rouse the careless or recover the fallen'.

Nor am I sure that throughout the book there is not confusion between religion and theology. Many might agree that 'religion', as a sense of the transcendent, was needed as a background for life and culture. But any synthesis, or integrated world-view, must be the work of the intellect, and this involves theology and doctrine. But it is in the transition from religion to theology that all the difficulties occur, and it is of theologies that all the questions are raised. In short, Dawson seems to stop when the questions are becoming dangerously exciting. Suppose his skill and passion has converted us to seek a

religion (as well it may — reasonably or not) has he given us any guidance as to whether it must be found in Papal Bulls, the XXXIX Articles or the Westminster Confession?

There is a related difficulty in the matter of social organization. I am not clear whether Dawson supposes that in *all future* cultures there must be prophets, priests and kings or not. Would he agree that instead of kings, we might have Party Leaders, shop stewards or Generalissimos; instead of priests, artists and poets; instead of prophets, newspaper magnates? All these might well portray, invoke or proclaim, the power, control and will of a transcendent God. To answer the question we have posited would be to judge between one social organization and another and that surely needs a *political philosophy* — which Dawson has not given us.

The truth is that to recommend 'religion' as a cure for the world's ill is really to utter no more than a bedside platitude; but to work out a comprehensive Christian metaphysics seems so difficult a task that it may seem that the patient will die before it is available. To those of us who are sympathetic to Dawson's broad contention, he will certainly underline the urgency of the task of elaborating a Christian metaphysics and encourage us to proceed, but we could hardly say that he gives us any useful suggestions for the harder task. From a philosophy of history which, if not necessarily so, might well be Christian, to a Christian metaphysics is a laborious road, but can civilization be preserved without the harder journey? If not, we must begin where the book leaves off.

I. T. RAMSEY

BARROWS DUNHAM: *Man Against Myth*. Frederick Muller, 10s. 6d. net

Professor Dunham is a philosopher. He does not believe in any fugitive and cloistered philosophical virtue. No narrow positivistic cabbage-patch for him to cultivate. He possesses a passion for social justice, and he ventures far afield to do battle with dragons of anti-social aspect. The philosophical discipline equips him with the weapons of clarification and analysis, weapons which he wields with no little dexterity. 'Perhaps we can say that it is philosophy which tells us what we mean when we are talking, or whether, while talking, we indeed mean anything' (p. 21). The dragons, too, he claims, are philosophical dragons, in so far as they are 'generalizations which exceed *all* the sciences' and upon which the sciences themselves cannot pass judgment. Be this as it may, the important thing is that they are dragons and that they obstruct the path to political progress. Someone must slay them, and who better than a philosophical and socialistic St George?

Professor Dunham believes that 'modern society' (i.e. capitalistic society) is distinguished by three evil characteristics — the deliberate refusal to produce goods in abundance, gross inequality in the distribution of goods actually produced, and economic privilege in the working of political institutions. In order to conceal or excuse these characteristics several social myths have been spread abroad, for example, that it is impossible to change human nature, or that there are two sides to every question. If these were true, they could be used to justify the present economic and political structure — and in fact they are frequently so used. Professor Dunham is convinced that this structure can be changed and ought to be changed. In this book he analyses several of these myths and seeks to demonstrate their falsity.

These myths may be divided, roughly, into three classes: (1) those which support the view that it is impossible to establish a more just society; (2) those which support the view that a more just society is morally undesirable; and (3) those which buttress the present state of things by encouraging inactivity.

(1) It is sometimes asserted that man is incurably selfish or incurably stupid

or both, and that you cannot change human nature. In the sense of 'human nature' which is here relevant, the author contends that human nature can be, and often is, changed. He certainly makes his point, but he has too great a faith in the ability of a changed environment to change human virtues and vices. For instance, he asserts that the selfishness of selfish acts 'derives not from the desires which prompted them, but the conditions under which they are performed' (p. 42). If this is so, you have merely to change the conditions and you eliminate selfishness. But is it really so? Or, again, can we accept the behaviourism implicit in the following? — 'If we find in some people behaviour-traits which we deem to be undesirable, our duty will lie . . . in removing the environmental causes. If research should reveal an occasional lazy Negro, our duty would not lie in increasing his poverty and therefore his laziness. We have only to give him adequate food and the laziness will disappear' (p. 96).

'You cannot be free and safe.' This may mean much or little; but as a political slogan in defence of *laissez faire* capitalism it is quickly and ably killed.

(2) The essential theme of this class of myths is that it is right for one group of people to dominate others. The author here combats the doctrine of racialism, the Darwinian theory of the 'survival of the fittest' as applied to human relationships, and the belief 'that you have to look after yourself', i.e. that selfishness, as well as being the best policy, is also ethically right. It is on the last point that the author may be thought to falter. He claims that 'when mankind has attained a state in which goods and services abound and exploitation has ceased . . . selfishness, having no longer anything important to do, will wither away, taking our problem with it' (p. 186). Is not selfishness a rather more stubborn old dragon?

(3) Here the author attacks the logical positivists for their ethical and political irresponsibility ('all problems are merely verbal'), solipsists and idealists for the same sin ('thinking makes it so'), 'balancers' and 'wobblers' for refraining from decisive political action ('there are two sides to every question'), and artists with no sense of social duty ('you cannot mix art and politics'). He scores many palpable hits, but is too ready to find the real grounds for a philosophical belief in the economic structure of society. Solipsism is *not*, as he maintains, the core of philosophical idealism; but, as he realizes, only solipsisms among idealistic philosophies could plausibly be linked with economic individualism. The significance even of this correlation is highly questionable.

Despite these criticisms, which are in effect criticisms of certain Marxian presuppositions, this is a valuable book and deserves to be widely read. It has a clarity of thought, a warmth of feeling and a wittiness of expression which are not often found together. It stimulates our critical thought, and may well stir us to action. If so, we shall find our path littered with the dead or dying bodies of not a few mythical monsters which would otherwise have impeded our progress.

PETER BAELEZ

P. N. FURBANK: Samuel Butler (1835-1902). *Cambridge University Press*, 6s. net.

The core of this essay (which won the Le Bas Prize in 1946) is the long first chapter in which the author defends Butler from the attack of Mr Malcolm Muggeridge in *The Earnest Atheist*. Mr Muggeridge disliked and despised Butler, and really hated Festing Jones whom he ridiculed and abused. But I do not believe that his spiteful, amusing and not altogether candid book caused the decline in interest in Butler. It was at once put in its place by Mr Desmond MacCarthy's elaborate review in the *Sunday Times* of September 6th and 13th, 1936. Mr Muggeridge had announced that Festing Jones forsook Butler after 1900 and broke his heart. Mr MacCarthy, giving dates of the times Butler and Festing Jones spent together, showed that this was an absurd exaggeration, and

that the slight estrangement had ended before Butler made his last will. Mr Muggeridge had been allowed to see the Butler MSS., but he did not let the reader know that Butler had written on June 4th, 1902: 'I have left Jones, with whom I have made up all estrangement, £500. We are now as good friends as ever.'

The real reason for Butler's decline was fashion. Mr Bernard Shaw, who after a long struggle had become an idol, praised him. *The Way of All Flesh* pleased those young who disliked their parents and envied them their money. There was a Butler boom. It became the thing to read (or to pretend to read) Butler just as it was the thing to dislike (without reading) George Eliot. Too much was published. There was bound to be a cold fit. New idols were set up. A generation which professed to think Mr T. S. Eliot a great critic and a master of prose (to say nothing of his poetry) would not also profess to admire Samuel Butler.

However, those who do think — with Mr Furbank — that *The Earnest Atheist* was 'convincing', was 'devastating', will find something to interest them in this first chapter. Butler was damaged by his upbringing, but not ruined; he saved himself, he escaped — with scars. This is the gist of Mr Furbank's view. I see other and later mischief. Butler's sordid sexual life damaged him morally, mentally (consider the dirt and the many cheap gibes in the *Further Extracts from the Notebooks*) and, perhaps, physically. 'He knoweth not that the dead are there.'

Mr Furbank is distressed at the time and energy wasted (this is his view) by Butler on the *Odyssey*. But in 1929 Mr B. Farrington, then a lecturer in South Africa, in his *Samuel Butler and the Odyssey*, described *The Authoress of the Odyssey* as 'the most important book on the Odyssey that has ever been written'. And this has not prevented Mr Farrington from reaching professorial rank in Great Britain. Certainly the classical pundits of the day did not pay much attention to Butler's theories. But specialists do not, as a rule, welcome the work of amateurs, unless those amateurs have made a position for themselves by their social gifts or by their money. Not all of those who live by the classics seem to love them or to do much for them, except in a narrow professional way. Then, too, Butler damaged his chances of winning the ordinary reader by his unfortunate method of beginning his book. He knew how much humbug there is about reading; that very few had read the *Odyssey*, even in translation, or would read it in order to follow his argument. So he began with a long and forbidding abstract, which must have repelled many, and which all knowledgeable readers skip.

'*Life and Habit* is another *Erewhon*', said Butler to one who asked him why he did not write another *Erewhon*. Mr Furbank does not realize the freshness of *Life and Habit*; he seems to prefer the later books on evolution. His view of Butler as a scientist (at any rate on p. 33, for he seems to retract on p. 34) is that 'for him the whole business does not matter'. But Butler was in deadly earnest. He thought that Darwin's theory expelled mind from the universe. He also thought that Darwin was unfair to his predecessors Buffon, Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck, and that he made undue claims to originality. Certainly Butler succeeded in making Darwin behave unfairly to him (largely through carelessness, as appeared later), and in causing Darwin to make many small changes in the later editions of *The Origin of Species*. Darwin (badly advised by friends) failed to repair the wrong done to Butler, but — hedging and shuffling — he did partly retract the claims to originality made in the early editions. Mr. Furbank's short account of this on pp. 70-72 is good. 'Darwin writes scientifically', says Mr Furbank, 'and . . . Butler does not.' It would be far truer to say that Darwin wrote confusedly and that Butler wrote clearly. Butler was not an experimental scientist; he reasoned on the facts and observations of others. But on them he reasoned and wrote better than the experimentalists and observers. He knew

exactly what he wanted to say and how to say it. Not so Darwin. How many living men have read the whole of *The Origin of Species*? How many ever read it through? They talked about it and borrowed it, no doubt; or even bought it. But Dr Johnson's 'I would rather praise it than read it' comes to mind from a more outspoken epoch.

A very important feature in Butler's attitude to men and things was his distinction between γνῶσις and ἀγάπη, his contempt for the former, his loving reverence for the latter. It is this which makes him an ally of Mr Oakeshott in the fight against 'Rationalism'. It would be interesting if Mr Furbank in a second edition, should one be called for, could find space to consider Butler on γνῶσις and ἀγάπη.

It seems odd that a writer so sensitive as Mr Furbank, repelled by the Butler dinners, 'by the vulgarity of menus embossed with a quotation from *Life and Habit*', should repeatedly allow himself to mention living persons without their titles. We are told in the Foreword of 'a number of corrections of expression' for which the author is indebted to Professor Willey. It is therefore surprising to read on p. 6, 'Talent in the sort of writing engaged upon by Butler'. It seems strange, too, that a man who has spent weeks (if not months) reading Butler's prose should write such a sentence as this:

'But I am forced to admit that, irritating and bad in taste as Muggeridge's attack upon Butler is, my difficulty is not merely that of disentangling the specific criticism of Butler from what in this book appears to me as the extraneous novel-writing element in it, or from what I think to have a force borrowed from a lucky coincidence of two temporary attitudes of the public at the time of its writing, attitudes for the indulgence of which Butler was made unfairly a victim' (p. 2). Or rather these things would seem surprising and strange, if one did not realize that in this century one great result of the Renaissance has been reversed. During the Renaissance the faculty of literary appreciation was recovered, and the realization of beauty in literature swept men off their feet. In the Middle Ages men read Virgil and Ovid, Virgil as the prophet of the Gentiles and the wizard, Ovid as a great teller of stories. But in Catullus, Lucretius, Tibullus, Propertius, they saw no virtue, and they almost lost them. Indeed there was a time when they had mislaid what was probably the only manuscript of Catullus in the world. Of the fate of Greek there is no need to speak. In the twentieth century prose has become a wordy jargon. The parts of speech are confused. Substantives are used as adjectives, verbs as substantives, substantives, again, as verbs. Samuel Butler was far too clear a thinker and far too good a writer, far too original and versatile to be popular in this present age of jargon and nonsense, specialism and envy.

B. GOULDING BROWN

PAUL ROUBICZEK: *The Misinterpretation of Man*. Routledge, 12s. 6d. net.

Mr Roubiczek maintains that Germany was only the first country to pay the price of the dangerous doctrines of the nineteenth century but his analysis of their falsity is inspired by the hope that we may be able to resist their influence before it is too late. The experiment of renouncing Christ and living without God he determines to 'judge in its own terms, so as to prevent a premature acceptance of the Christian point of view', but his trial of the Napoleonic and the Nietzschean bid for superhuman power, the Hegelian and the Materialist plea for scientific progress, and finally of Marx's revolutionary and Tolstói's Christian Socialism, prove to him that there is no alternative to Christianity. He seeks, however, a 'restatement of the Christian creed' so as to accommodate that 'complete liberation of man from all spiritual chains' which the Renaissance had successfully begun but which went so tragically astray in the last century.

The analysis begins with Kant and Goethe because they represent a stage in our spiritual history where it is clear that the Renaissance has made the medieval conception of the universe impossible. Kant invalidated rational metaphysics and turned, with Goethe, to explore man's purely subjective ethical kingdom; the still objective reality of Heaven and Hell, challenged so boldly by the Renaissance but always with the certainty of an answer, is forsaken for an inner life of the soul, where values which empiricism denied to material existence might yet find refuge. The apotheosis of the hero was the religion which captured the world of action as Romanticism dominated the dream world of the mind. Marx rose above the polarity in his critique of Capital but reduced man to the level of the insect in his rational system; while Nietzsche went mad in an attempt to establish a faith that would withstand reason. The tension between a mind striving for certainty and a world awaiting destruction was to be measured by Dostoevsky alone, 'the first architect of a new age', in a dimension where he reaffirmed through a mystique of Guilt, Suffering, Pity and Love, the ethical sanctity of man, who can transcend again the inescapable limitations and necessities of his earthly being into a free realm of the spirit. Dostoevsky offered no ready 'solution' to our problems and in this refusal of dogma Mr Roubiczek sees not only an artistic merit but also an essential lesson. The age of formulas has begun, and the industrial machine will enforce its demands for a correspondingly integrated and efficient social machine; but within its framework, where revolution will only mean dissolution, we must learn the inward freedom, when we too shall be able to say with that great Russian: 'I believe in Christ and I profess this faith, *not as a child*, but as one whose hosannah has passed through the great purgatory of doubt.'

Mr Roubiczek's lucid style steers a clear course through the stormy and treacherous waters of the nineteenth century, and with the compass of his precise dialectical method he has begun to chart seas where there have been all too many wrecks.

ANTHONY K. THORLBY

DOROTHY STIMSON: *Scientists and Amateurs, A History of the Royal Society. Sigma Books, 1949.*

The Royal Society has not lacked its historians, from 'fat Tom Sprat' five years after the granting of the Royal Charter (1667), Thomas Birch who published the complete record of its affairs up to 1687 (1756-57), and C. R. Weld (1848), to Sir Henry Lyons whose history of its administration was published in 1944. So long as there is an interest in science there will be an interest in the Royal Society, not only for its prominent part in contemporary work — as when Einstein was vindicated in 1919 — but for its unique historical tradition. It is the most venerable scientific assembly, its *Philosophical Transactions* (founded in 1665) is the oldest journal in existence, and election to it has always been the most coveted of scientific distinctions.

The latest historian of the Royal Society has already published a number of articles on its earlier years, and I looked forward to reading her book with pleasure. Unfortunately I must confess to a disappointment which seems to arise from the incompatibility of the two halves of her title, for in following the dual theme the *science* of the Royal Society is rather squeezed out of the picture. Dr Stimson tells us that because it was a body of amateurs the Royal Society was always in danger of degenerating into a gentleman's club. This is true, but it does not face the fact that until at least the end of the eighteenth century *all* — or virtually all — scientists were amateurs, and if, from Newton's death to the end of the century science did not flourish as it had from 1660 to 1720, either in the Royal Society or in the country as a whole, this was not so much the result of

a fault in the organization of the Society, as of a changing social trend. The polite metropolitan world from which the Royal Society had always been recruited was still buying Adams's microscopes and Short's telescopes for the drawing-room, but the really creative centres were now to be found in the provinces, on the edge of the industrial revolution. The Royal Society failed for many years to recognize that this was important, but so did the whole of the English upper class. It is perhaps excusable for a historian of the Society to devote 115 pages out of 250 to the first half century of its existence, but not to give full weight to the genuine, positive scientific work of the Fellows in any period, to mention the *Principia* only in parenthesis, while dwelling at some length on the ridicule of Stubbe, Shadwell, Addison and Hill, is to run the risk of giving the unwary reader a very false impression. The eighteenth century is indeed not a brilliant period in the history of the Royal Society, of which Joseph Black for instance was never a Fellow, yet it would seem less dim if Réaumur, Buffon, Voltaire, Linnaeus, Cavendish, Dolland, Erasmus Darwin, Smeaton, Hunter and Lavoisier were than names on the author's pages.

Similarly the seventy pages (!) on the period from 1800 to the present day are occupied entirely with a discussion of the organization of the Society's activities, a subject already amply handled by Sir Henry Lyons, and of science we hear less than of the dining club. The reader is left ignorant of the name of James Clerk Maxwell (Fellow 1861-79), though he is twice told of the election of Princess Elizabeth, and carefully referred to the *Baltimore Sun* as authority for this piece of information!

There are also too many mistakes of detail, of which I quote a few outstanding examples from the earlier pages: five, not seven, planets were known in 'the Times of Queen Elizabeth and Cromwell' (p. 1); Galen was not a Roman (p. 4); Copernicus did not say the sun was the centre of the universe (p. 41); Galileo's book on mechanics

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was not called *Dialoghi delle Nuove Scienze*, nor was it published in 1636 (p. 42); Robert Hooke did not invent the main-spring for watches (p. 43); Samuel Pepys did not die in 1686 (p. 126) he lived till 1703.

However, the faults of the book, which are considerable both in conception and execution, must not be allowed to overshadow its merits. It is a product of the literary school in the history of science which has grown to some importance and their work, if less philosophically serious than that of Sarton and Singer, for example, has a good deal more attraction for the general reader. The attitude of society to the virtuoso is well depicted, especially for the earlier period, and the satires of playwrights and poetasters make amusing reading. There is a full account of the ideas of the 'projectors' — Comenius and his successors — who prepared the way for a scientific assembly. At the other extreme Dr Stimson is able to make the story of the reorganization of the Society and its recapture by the real scientists in the early nineteenth century an absorbing one. The whole book is neatly produced and printed, though the plates might have been sharper.

A. R. HALL

RALPH TYMMS: *Doubles in Literary Psychology*. Bowes & Bowes, 12s. 6d. net.

The title of this work is somewhat obscure and one should therefore perhaps explain that this is a study of the *Doppelgänger* in literature. The author is primarily concerned with an investigation of the double as a recurrent theme in German Romantic literature and with the effect of this heritage on later writers. An introductory chapter presents a rapid survey of some outstanding literary presentations of this theme before the Romantic era, and prefaces this by a consideration of the origins of the theme in primitive tales and beliefs. Most of the recurrent themes of literature could no doubt be traced back to elementary states of consciousness, but it is difficult to see how our understanding of literature is to be enhanced by this process. The scope of Mr. Tymms's opening chapter is so large that his treatment is necessarily sketchy. A detailed examination of the immediate sources of the German Romantics would, perhaps, have been both more relevant and interesting, for what the book tells us of Mesmer and G. H. Schubert suggests that they could profitably have been treated at greater length. The connection between Jean Paul's doubles and Goethe's complementary pairs is, I would suggest, greater than the book indicates, for it now seems certain that much of Jean Paul's work is a comment on Goethe. Some critics have seen in *Titan* a counterblast to *Wilhelm Meister*; and, faced with *Titan* and *Siebenkäs*, one cannot help questioning the judgment that 'Jean Paul's conception of the double is never profound, and sometimes it is quite trivial' (p. 33). Life for Jean Paul was one continuous conflict of coexistent but uncomplementary essences. It was that sense of being simultaneously inside and outside an experience which dictated his ironical style and his disjointed subjects; his use of the double was certainly stimulated by the hallucination he experienced in early life when he saw himself dead. And it would seem that the double was just as much the expression of real experience for Jean Paul as it was for E. T. A. Hoffmann.

On Hoffmann the book has much to say of considerable interest. The transference of fate-myths with psychological realism is well demonstrated and the selection of the passage from *Der Sandmann* (p. 64) for special emphasis is fully justified. More might have been made of the fact that the Count and his tutor in *Die Elixiere des Teufels* sampled the 'elixir' and pronounced that it was nothing but good Marsala, for this casts doubt on the view that it is evil forces outside man which awaken his second self. This is the crucial scene of the novel and the way is prepared by the conversation between the two monks on the

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genuine efficacy of relics. It is the key to the irony of the whole novel, and is an excellent illustration of the obverse of the view presented in the passage from *Der Sandmann* which Mr Tymms quotes. For even Truth, so it would seem, was a *Doppelgänger* for Hoffmann.

This connection between irony and the motif of the *Doppelgänger* would seem to be fundamental, and explains why such otherwise dissimilar writers as Heine, Grillparzer, Raimund, Maupassant, Dostoevski and Henry James were attracted to this subject. The latter part of the book suffers, like the opening chapter, from trying to deal with too much material. For when Mr. Tymms skates over Heine, Büchner and Droste-Hülshoff one wishes that he would either consider them as carefully as he does Raimund (a particularly good section) or Dostoevsky, or eave them out.

E. A. BLACKALL

BOOKS RECEIVED

The inclusion of any book in this list does not preclude its review in a later issue

P. W. S. ANDREWS: *An Economic Geography of Great Britain*. Methuen, 32s. 6d. net.

MEYRICK H. CARRÉ: *Phases of Thought in England*. Oxford University Press, 30s. net.

RUDOLF FRIEDMANN: *Kierkegaard, The Analysis of the Psychological Personality*. Peter Nevill, 3s. 6d. net.

ARTHUR KEPPEL-JONES: *South Africa*. Hutchinson's University Library, 7s. 6d. net.

PETER LASLETT (Ed.): *Patriarcha, or, the Natural Powers of the Kings of England Asserted, and other Political Works of Sir Robert Filmer*. Blackwell, 12s. 6d. net.

J. P. MAYER: *Political Thought in France from the Revolution to the Fourth Republic*. Routledge, 12s. 6d. net.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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ROY F. NICHOLS: Professor of American History and Institutions, University of Cambridge, 1948-9.

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